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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Isolate nations that harbour terrorists: India at SCO

In a veiled jab at China, India also called for territorial integrity

ASTANA, 4 JULY

India on Thursday asked the international community to "isolate and expose" those countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens and condone terrorism, underlining that if left unchecked, terrorism can become a major threat to regional and global peace, in a veiled jibe at China and its all-weather ally, Pakistan.

India also said respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is essential for connectivity and infrastructure projects, in an apparent reference to China which is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes with several countries.

Delivering Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit (SCO) here in the Kazakh capital, Astana, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the SCO occupies a prominent place in India's foreign policy.

EAM Jaishankar delivering India's statement at the SCO Summit on behalf of PM Narendra Modi, in Astana, Kazakhstan ***PHOTO: PTI***

He said the summit comes in the backdrop of pandemic impact, ongoing conflicts, rising tensions, trust deficits and an increasing number of hotspots around the world.

He said economic development requires robust connectivity.

China has invested billions in various power projects and road networks in Pakistan under the USD 65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is seen as an attempt by China to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments across the world.

The CPEC is opposed by India as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). China is doling out huge sums of money for infrastructure projects in countries from Asia to Africa and Europe through its BRI. The US' previous Donald Trump administration had been extremely critical of the BRI and was of the view that China's "predatory financing" is leaving smaller countries under huge debt endangering their sovereignty.

China has also been flexing its muscles in the strategically vital region and is also engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea (SCS) and the East China Sea (ECS). Chinese naval ships and submarines are also active in the Indian Ocean. *—PTI*

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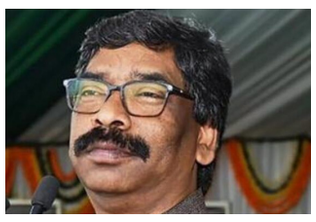
MAXIMUM CITY, MAXIMUM LOVE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi poses for group photos with the T20 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team and the championship trophy in New Delhi, on Thursday; fans gather ahead of the Indian cricket team's open bus victory parade, at Mumbai's Marine Drive ***PHOTO: PTI*** ***>>>More on Page 8***

A THREE-TIME CM

Days after bail, Hemant back as J'khand CM

RANCHI, 4 JULY



Hemant Soren ***PHOTO: PTI***

JMM Executive President Hemant Soren on Thursday took oath as the 13th chief minister of Jharkhand.

He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor CP Radhakrishnan at the Raj Bhavan.

Champai Soren, who resigned as the chief minister on Wednesday, was also present. Hemant was released from jail on 28 June after Jharkhand High Court granted bail to him in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. He had resigned as the chief minister before his arrest on 31 January by Enforcement Directorate.

Meanwhile, no decision has been taken about the Hemant's Cabinet.

Asked about the council of ministers, Jharkhand Congress in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir said that the high command will decide about the party faces in the Cabinet.

Mir said the Congress is yet to decide who will join the cabinet from the party.

After Lok Sabha elections, the strength of the JMM-led alliance was reduced to 45 MLAs – JMM-27, Congress-17 and RJD-1.

Two JMM MLAs, Nalin Soren and Joba Majhi, are now parliamentarians, while Jama legislator Sita Soren resigned to contest the general elections on a BJP ticket.

The JMM expelled two more legislators – Bishunpur MLA Chamra Linda and Boriyo MLA Lobin Hembrom – from the party. Likewise, the BJP's strength in the assembly has reduced to 24, as two of its MLAs – Dhulu Mahto (Baghmara) and Manish Jaiswal (Hazaribag) – are now MPs. The saffron party has expelled Mandu MLA Jaiprakash Bhai Patel after he joined the Congress to contest the polls. The current strength of the 81-member Jharkhand assembly is 76. *—PTI*

Teen dies after stepping on live wire in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

- Shreyas came into contact with a live wire that was dangling in front of his house.

An 18-year-old youth, Shreyas, a native of Vijayapura, died on Thursday after suffering an electric shock outside his residence in Yaraganahalli village, Devanahalli.

The incident occurred around 7.30 am when Shreyas came into contact with a live wire that was dangling in front of his house.

He collapsed and was rushed to the hospital, but doctors confirmed he died upon arrival due to a dropped pulse rate.

However, Shreyas's family alleges negligence, claiming a delayed ambulance arrival and a lack of immediate medical attention at the hospital contributed to his death. They have filed a case at the Kempegowda Airport Police Station.According to the FIR, the doctor did not immediately shift the victim to the emergency ward, resulting in treatment delay.

This is not the first electrical accident in Bengaluru. In 2023, a woman and her child were electrocuted in Whitefield, and a 10-year-old girl died after contact with a live wire in Varthur-Gunjur Road.

BESCOM officials were unavailable for comment regarding the disconnected wires or the reported delay in response. *—Salar News*

Karnataka govt bans bike taxis starting today

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

Karnataka government is set to ban bike taxi operations in the State, effective Friday.

The Transport Department on Thursday ordered regional transport offices (RTOs) to crack down on unauthorised bike taxis, including electric bike taxis.

The State alleges that bike taxis, operated through apps such as Ola, Uber, Rapido, and Namma Yatri, violate the Motor Vehicles Act.

Following the directive, over 1,000 drivers barged into the Transport Department office in Shanti Nagar. The crackdown against bike taxis came after autorickshaw, cab and bus operators' associations met the transport commissioner on Thursday seeking a ban on illegal bike taxisThe ban comes amid disputes between auto, taxi and bike taxi riders, which have led to law and order issues, including concerns about women's safety. In March, Karnataka banned electric bike taxi services, labelling them "unsafe for women," "illegal," and in violation of the Motor Vehicles Act. Nataraj Sharma, President of the Federation of Private Transport Operators Association, told Salar News that the City has lakhs of auto drivers and it does not require e-bike taxis. "E-bike taxis have impacted the livelihoods of 10 lakh autorickshaw drivers," he said. "They operate illegally without a commercial licence and regulatory measures. The riders' identities are not disclosed, and some of the riders are underage. Moreover, women's safety is a concern, and we have seen multiple cases of sexual harassment being reported," he said. *—Salar News*

Auto and taxi drivers block the road during their protest against the bike taxis infront of RTO office, at Shantinagar in Bengaluru on Thursday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

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6 SEVADARS OF BHOLE BABA ARRESTED IN HATHRAS STAMPEDE

HATHRAS, 4 JULY

The Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday said they have arrested six members of the organising committee of preacher Bhole Baba's 'satsang' in the Hathras stampede that killed 121 people.

The arrested include two women. The only accused named in the FIR is at large while Surajpal, who is also known as Narayan Sakar Hari and Bhole Baba, will be questioned if required during investigation, a senior officer said. The preacher was not mentioned as an accused in the FIR lodged at the local Sikandra Rau police station on Tuesday. Those arrested are Ram Ladaite, 50; Upendra ingh Yadav, 62, Megh Singh, 61; Mukesh Kumar, 38, Manju Yadav, 30, and Manju Devi, 40. *—PTI*

State to start door-to-door dengue awareness

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Thursday directed the deputy commissioners of all the districts to launch a door-to-door dengue awareness drive in the state. The Minister gave the directions during a video conference with the DCs, chief executive officers of all the Zilla (district) Panchayats and senior officers. Rao told the DCs and the CEOs of ZPs to rope in district health officers, health workers, ASHA and Anganwadi workers to destroy the dengue larva. ***—PTI***

S Korean firms vow to invest in Karnataka

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

The Karnataka government engaged in discussion with the major Korean companies to reinforce the state's economic landscape across gaming, FMCG, and automotive sectors. The meeting took place between MB Patil, Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka and prominent Korean companies such as YG-1, Krafton Inc., Go Pizza, and HY Automotive Controls. During the meeting, YG-1 announced a significant investment of USD 150 million in Karnataka. YG-1 is a global cutting tool manufacturer based in South Korea. The company already operates a manufacturing facility in Tumakuru Machine Tool Park (TMTP) in Karnataka. ***—PTI***

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Govt's inaction over Rajkot gaming zone draws HC ire

AHMEDABAD, 4 JULY

The Gujarat High Court on Thursday again rebuked the state government over the Rajkot game zone fire that killed 27 people in May, wondering why a demolition order against the illegal structure was not executed for nearly a year. The censure came in response to an affidavit submitted to the division bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Pranav Trivedi that has been hearing a suo motu PIL (public interest litigation) it had taken up on 26 May, a day after the tragedy. The Gujarat government on Thursday also submitted its "fact-finding inquiry" report in a sealed cover to the HC on the game zone blaze. ***—PTI***

JEE aspirant dies by suicide in Kota, 13th this year

KOTA, 4 JULY

A 16-year-old engineering aspirant allegedly died by suicide here, police said on Thursday. He was found hanging in his room. This is the thirteenth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in Kota stood at 26 in 2023. Sandeep Kumar Kurmi, a native of Bihar's Nalanda district, was taking coaching for the JEE in Kota for the last two years and lived in a paying guest (PG) room in Mahaveer Nagar - III, the police said. At around 7 am on Thursday, the teen's classmate went to his room. When he did not get any response, he peeped through the window and found Kurmi hanging from the ceiling fan. If you need emotional support, please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777. ***—PTI***

UK votes as Labour eyes PM Sunak's ouster

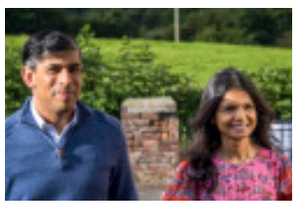
LONDON, 4 JULY

The future of Rishi Sunak as Britain's first Prime Minister of Indian origin and the leader of the Conservative Party – fighting anti-incumbency of 14 years – hangs in the balance as millions cast their ballots in a historic general election on Thursday.

The British Indian leader and the man who wants his job – Labour leader Keir Starmer were among the early voters from an estimated 46 million registered voters as around 40,000 polling booths opened across the country at 7 am local time.

Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty walked hand-in-hand to their local polling booth on a sunny day in his constituency of Richmond and Northallerton in Yorkshire, northern England.

A little later, Starmer and wife Victoria were at their polling station in Camden, north London, sporting Labour red colours. *—PTI*



UK PM Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty ***PHOTO: PTI***

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IN 10 CITIES

Air pollution kills 33K Indians every year

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

According to a study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal, more than 33,000 deaths could be attributed to air pollution every year on an average across 10 cities — Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Shimla and Varanasi.

On average, 7.2 per cent of all daily deaths are in the most polluted cities. The deaths were linked to PM2.5 levels higher than World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for safe exposure,

Delhi was found to have the largest fraction of daily and yearly deaths attributable to PM2.5 air pollution, caused by particles sized 2.5 micrometres or less in diameter.

Delhi was found to have the largest fraction of daily and yearly deaths attributable to PM2.5 air pollution ***PHOTO: PTI***

Sources of such pollution include vehicular and industrial emissions.

Researchers said that daily exposure to PM2.5 pollution in Indian cities is linked with a higher risk of death, and locally created pollution could be possibly causing these deaths.

The international team included researchers from Varanasi's Banaras Hindu University and the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, New Delhi.

They found that an increase of 10 micrograms per cubic metre in the average of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution measured over two days (short-term exposure) was related to 1.4 per cent higher daily mortality.

The death risk was found to be doubled (2.7 per cent) per a 10 microgram per cubic metre increase, when the researchers restricted their analysis to observations below Indian standards of air quality, less stringent than WHO guidelines for safe exposure.

—PTI

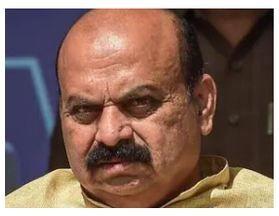

PHOTO: PTI

Bommai asks Gadkari to upgrade Ilkal-Karwar to NH

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Former Chief Minister and Haveri-Gadag constituency MP Basavaraj Bommai has requested the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, to upgrade the Ilkal-Karwar state highway to a national highway. Bommai met Gadkari on Wednesday and expressed his pride in his tenure as the Chief Minister of Karnataka. He highlighted the transformative changes in the road and highway infrastructure of Karnataka. Additionally, he discussed with Gadkari the implementation of the Gajendragad ring road in Ron Taluk and the Gadag ring road projects. Chikballapur MP Sudhakar was also present on this occasion. On 27 June, Gadkari, along with Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi reviewed the progress of the ongoing projects in Odisha. *—ANI*

Take precautions against Zika virus, dengue: Min to DCs

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

Health Minister Dinesh Gundurao has instructed District Collectors across the state to remain vigilant not only against dengue but also the Zika virus. The state minister ordered a temporary clinic to be installed and check up spots in the areas with high dengue incidence and also will help to prevent Zika virus. Speaking to reporters, Health minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said, "There is a suspected case of Zika Virus in Shivamogga and In the next few days the district collectors should come with temporary clinics in areas with high dengue incidence and testing for Zika Virus ensuring anyone with fever undergoes dengue testing to facilitate early diagnosis and treatment, thereby preventing fatalities associated with delayed treatment." *—PTI*

City airport tops in perishable exports for 4th year

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

The Kempegowda International Airport here said on Thursday it continues to serve as the number one airport in India for exporting perishables for the fourth consecutive year. The airport recorded a total perishable cargo tonnage of 63,188 metric tons in 2023-24, an 18 per cent growth compared to the previous financial year, according to the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), which owns and operates it.

"This achievement highlights KIA's significant contribution to India's perishable exports, handling 28 per cent of the country's total perishable cargo. BLR Airport also processed 44 per cent of the south India's total perishable cargo and 28 per cent of the national share for FY 2023-24," the BIAL said in a statement.

The airport also secured the number one position for poultry product exports in 2023-24, shipping 47,041 metric tons, it added.

Additionally, the airport exported 2,050 metric tons of flowers in the last financial year, it was stated. *—PTI*

Officials not following laws to face govt's rap

Cabinet gives approval for introducing a counselling system

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

State Cabinet on Thursday approved a new policy under which officials will face "consequences" of not following laws, and giving wrong advice to the government, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said.

Briefing reporters on the Cabinet decisions, he said, to bring transparency in the transfers of sub-registrars, the Cabinet has given its approval for introducing a counselling system, which will come into effect immediately. For the first division assistants (FDA), counselling will be effective from next year.

It has also given administrative approval for Rs 2,000 crore for infrastructure development in 10 municipal corporations, under the Mahatma Gandhi Nagar Vikas Yojana (MGNVY) 2.0.

It has also given administrative approval for Rs 2,000 crore for infrastructure development in 10 municipal corporations *PHOTO: ANI*

The other decisions taken by the Cabinet include administrative approval of Rs 363.82 crore for the purchase of 840 BS-VI diesel buses for Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation, approval of an estimated Rs 84.58 crore for the purchase of utensils and furniture for Indira kitchen-cum-canteen as per the new menu, approval of an estimated Rs 256.15 crore for construction of a 100-bed hospital in seven taluks -- Anekal, Hospet, Khanapur, Nelamangala, Shirahatti, Shringeri and Yelanduru.

> Briefing reporters on the Cabinet decisions, he said, to bring transparency in the transfers of sub-registrars, the Cabinet has given its approval for introducing a counselling system, which will come into effect immediately

"The salient features of the 'Law and Policy 2023' is to ensure that the benefit of the Constitution reaches the people in terms of life with dignity; people should not be at the mercy of the government," Patil said. *—PTI*

UNDERPASS FINALLY CLEANED

The underpass near Yeshwanthpur bus stop was a health hazard as garbage was dumped there for months. However, after a video of the location went viral online, BBMP personnel cleaned the underpass on Thursday. The overflowing sewage was a health hazard for pedestrians and a nightmare for businesses *PHOTO: SALAR*

Close to 1,000 drives seige to the office of Transport department at Shanti Nagat in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

1,000 drivers barge into Transport Dept office

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

More than 1,000 auto and cab drivers laid siege to the office of Transport Department at Shanti Nagar in Bengaluru on Thursday demanding action against bike taxis running in the City and raising a host of demands. The sudden gathering of 1,000-odd drivers on the premises and parking of vehicles on the road created pandemonium. Police officers had to push the protesters out when they tried to enter the department's office.

Later, State government issued an order to enforce the ban on bike taxis in the State from Friday.

Federation of Karnataka State Private Transport Association in September 2023 had staged a protest raising a host of demands including a ban on illegal bike taxis, implementation of one-city one fare and a host of other demands.

The association wrote around 300 letters to the department to implement their demands. On Thursday, the association decided to give a final call to the transport commissioner to implement their demands. However, the association got a surprise when around 1,000 drivers with their vehicles thronged the office premises, leading to traffic bottleneck and throwing the life of passengers at the BMTC bus stand out of gear.

The drivers from Ola Cabs, Uber, Rapido, Namma Yatri and others had raised concerns about their earnings getting affected by the commissions enforced by ride-hailing operators. A few drivers shared their plight with Salar News.

"Ola company says they will take only 5 per cent of commission; however, there are times that they would cut our salary and pay only 10 per cent of the income promised," said Sudhakar, a driver attached with Ola Cabs.

Another driver said the Shakti scheme has put a spoke in their earnings. "Due to the Shakti Scheme, we are not getting rides and our income has reduced drastically. Adding to this, the rise in bike taxis is eating into our profits," he said.

Nataraj Sharma, president of the association, said, "After our protest, the department has agreed to implement five more demands by this week." The other demands raised by the association are directing RTOs to register school cabs and issue permits, implementing online special permits for vehicles above 12 seaters, stalling the Vehicle Location Tracking plan until proper negotiations on price are in place and directing RTOs to issue fitness certificates till then. *—Salar News*

The sudden gathering of 1,000-odd drivers on the premises and parking of vehicles on the road created pandemonium *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BSY CHALLENGES CM TO DISSOLVE ASSEMBLY

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

BJP stalwart BS Yediyurappa on Thursday challenged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to dissolve the State Assembly and go for elections now.

He claimed that the saffron party would win 140 to 150 seats. He said the State's people have rejected the 'useless guarantees', money and muscle power of Congress government and opted for BJP.

"If the elections are held, BJP will win 140 to 150 seats," the Lingayat strongman said during a BJP State Special Executive Meeting organised at the Palace Grounds here.

State has 224 Assembly and 28 Lok Sabha seats. Congress had come to power by winning 134 seats, but now the ruling party has trailed in places, which are represented by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and several ministers, he said. *—PTI*

MUDA scam: CM rejects BJP's demand for CBI probe

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday rejected BJP's demand for a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in allotment of sites to land losers, including his wife Parvathi, by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), as he stoutly denied any wrongdoing.

Terming the allegations against him by the opposition party as "political", he questioned whether his family has to give up their land, just because as he is Chief Minister.

BJP has alleged that alternative sites were also allotted to Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA, and sought his resignation. The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of over three acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout.

Siddaramaiah *PHOTO: PTI*

BJP has alleged that irregularities to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore had taken place in distribution of sites to land losers by MUDA. "Apparently 4,500-5,000 sites were allotted by flouting norms," a BJP leader claimed. However the KPCC General Secretary M Laxman denied the allegations and produced the timeline of land allotments.

•In 1992 the owner of 3 acres and 16 guntas of land was in the name of Javarayya and later confiscated by MUDA was given back to him in 1998.

•In 2005, BM Mallikarjunaswamy, Siddaramaiah's brother-in-law, purchased the land and in 2010, Mallikarjunaswamy transferred 3 acres and 16 guntas to Parvathi

• In 2015 MUDA divided the land into 59 plots and distributed them to people without issuing the notice.

• Upon finding out Siddaramiah's wife Parvathi in 2017 filed a complaint with MUDA about unauthorised allotment of her land, leading to 27 complaints to authorities.

Later, once again speaking to reporters, Siddaramaiah called BJP' allegations as "political", and said the party "doesn't have any other matter, and they were protesting, as per RSS' instructions." *—Salar News with PTI*

Darshan is innocent until proven guilty: Sumalatha

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

Former Mandya MP and actress Sumalatha Ambareesh has spoken out for the first time regarding the arrest of actor Darshan in the murder case of Renukaswamy.

Conveyed her condolences to Renukaswamy's family, she said in X platform on Thursday, "Let god give them strength and courage for Renukaswamy's loss. I pray that his family receive justice."

Addressing the criticism for her initial silence, Sumalatha recollected the deep bond her family shares with Darshan. "People criticising my silence are not aware of the relationship between our families. I knew Darshan before he became a star and we have a bond for over 25 years. He called Ambareesh his 'father' and called me 'Mother India'; he is always like our family."

Sumalatha highlighted Darshan's character, describing him as kind-hearted and compassionate, especially towards animals and he is always there for people in need. She expressed disbelief that he could not commit a crime and chose not to comment further. "I have faith in our justice system and nothing has been proven against him yet. Darshan deserves a fair trial," Sumalatha said.

Sumalatha reflected on the personal toll of the situation and its impact on the film industry. "I am concerned about Darshan's life, his family's security, and their future." She urged his supporters to remain calm. *—Salar News*

Darshan's judicial custody extended till 18 July

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

A court here on Thursday extended the judicial custody of Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa along with his friend Pavithra Gowda and others, who are accused in Renukaswamy murder case, till 18 July. All the 17 accused, including Darshan and Pavithra, were produced before the magistrate through video conferencing from Bengaluru and Tumakuru prisons, where they are lodged, as their judicial custody ended Thursday. *—PTI*

CS Patil, director of India Meteorological Centre in Bengaluru, has said coastal and Western Ghat regions have received heavy rainfall so far in July, especially Agumbe which registered 34 mm rainfall on 3 July alone *PHOTO: SALAR*

Widespread rain to continue in Karnataka till 12 July

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

The Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) on Thursday predicted widespread, moderate to heavy rains with isolated places experiencing very heavy rains till July 12 in the state.

CS Patil, director of India Meteorological Centre in Bengaluru, has said coastal and Western Ghat regions have received heavy rainfall so far in July, especially Agumbe which registered 34 mm rainfall on 3 July alone. Meanwhile, Malenadu district, which has been lagging compared to the rainfall it receives this time of the year, finally caught up with its share of rain.

According to 'X' handle Ghats of Karnataka (@ByTheRiverTunga) which tracks weather from Sringeri to Shimoga, River Tunga is flowing at its highest so far this year. Meanwhile, in Udupi district, heavy rains have brought many villages to a standstill, with people from low lying areas being evacuated to higher ground in boats.

Several 'X' users have posted pictures from this region as well. According to Adarsh P Cherugad, who has posted a picture of the overflowing river Suvarna, the flooding water submerged a bridge close to Perdoor. Uttara Kannada is also receiving heavy rainfall and the Aghanashini river is in full spate, stated 'X' users.

> According to 'X' handle Ghats of Karnataka (@ByTheRiverTunga) which tracks weather from Sringeri to Shimoga, River Tunga is flowing at its highest so far this year. Meanwhile, in Udupi district, heavy rains have brought many villages to a standstill, with people from low lying areas being evacuated to higher ground in boats

According to 'X' user Guruprasad Bhat, vehicular traffic in Kumta Sirsi Road is not possible due to the overflowing Aghanashini River. He has backed his claim with many videos of the region on the social media.

Meanwhile, another 'X' handle, Karnataka Weather, which tracks the state's weather diligently, has posted a 5 pm update for Bengaluru, stating that after a quiet day, clouds are gathering across the north and north west from Gottigere. Some users have reported light rain in Whitefield areas.

GAMING, AUTO AND FMCG

S Korean companies assure investment in State

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

The Karnataka government engaged in discussion with the major Korean companies to reinforce the state's economic landscape across gaming, FMCG, and automotive sectors.

The meeting took place between MB Patil, Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka and prominent Korean companies such as YG-1, Krafton Inc., Go Pizza, and HY Automotive Controls.

An organisation announced a significant investment of USD 150 million in Karnataka *PHOTO: X/@MBPATIL*

During the meeting, YG-1 announced a significant investment of USD 150 million in Karnataka. YG-1 is a global cutting tool manufacturer based in South Korea. The company already operates a manufacturing facility in Tumakuru Machine Tool Park (TMTP) in Karnataka.

Reacting to the investment decision of the company, Patil wrote in a post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), "YG-1 Announces Major Investment and Expansion Plans in State. YG-1, a leading global company in precision tooling, has announced a significant investment of $150 million in Karnataka.

Building on its commitment to cultural exchange, YG-1 is pleased to announce the establishment of a state-of-the-art Korean language learning and training centre in our State. To further fuel innovation and technological advancements, YG-1 has also proposed the creation of a cutting-edge R&D Center. The state government is committed to supporting YG-1's ambitious plans."

Among the key discussion points, future plans along with export strategies were prominent during the meeting, as per a release. Both sides discussed the opening up of a Korean Language training centre. Additionally, import duties from India to the US compared to Korea were also discussed, the release added.

During the meeting focused on Karnataka's FMCG ecosystem, Patil engaged Lim Jaewon, CEO of Go Pizza. *—ANI*

LK Advani discharged from hospital

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

BJP veteran and former deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani was discharged from the Apollo Hospital on Thursday evening, sources said. The 96-year-old was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday, days after being discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) following a night-long stay there. Advani was discharged from the Apollo Hospital around 5 pm, the sources said. The sources had said his condition remained stable after being admitted to the hospital on Wednesday night. Advani was brought to the facility around 9 pm on Wednesday. He was accompanied by his daughter Pratibha Advani. *—PTI*

CBI registers its first FIR under BNS

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The CBI has registered its first FIR under newly enforced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against 2 Delhi Police officers for allegedly demanding Rs 10 lakh bribe to help the release of a person lodged in Tihar Jail. BNS has replaced the British era IPC. The FIR registered on Wednesday evening booking Head Constables Ravindra Dhaka and Parveen Saini both posted in Narcotics Cell, Maurice Nagar, under BNA 61(2) related to alleged criminal conspiracy and provisions of bribery. The complainant told the CBI that medicines have been falsely shown in the possession of his brother. Dhaka allegedly told the complainant that IO of the case would settle for Rs 2.50 crore. *—PTI*

FIR against BJP workers over clash outside Cong office

AHMEDABAD, 4 JULY

Police on Thursday registered a First Information Report (FIR) against BJP workers over a clash outside the Congress' office in Paldi area here. The offence was registered hours after Opposition party threatened to launch a stir if no action was taken over BJP's protets over alleged anti-Hindu remarks of Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi. "We have taken a complaint from Congress and registered an FIR. No one has been arrested yet," said inspector B D Jhilaria of Ellisbridge police station. Earlier in the day, Gujarat Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil threatened to launch a protest claiming that police were not registering an FIR against BJP workers even after various pieces of evidence established that they were involved in the attack. Gandhi may visit Ahmedabad on 6 July and meet the Congress workers. The state unit of the party has extended an invitation to Gandhi and was confident that he will accept, Gohil added. *—PTI*

NCERT to recreate PM's 'Pariksha pe Charcha'

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's annual 'Pariksha pe Charcha' initiative might soon be recreated for a virtual platform, with the NCERT working on a proposal to develop a portal to host his speeches and allow students to capture selfies with him in an interactive 2D/3D environment. The move comes against the backdrop of a raging row over alleged irregularities in competitive examinations with the opposition raising questions on credibility of the examination processes in the country. The Opposition has taken swipes at Modi, demanding that he should hold one such interaction on medical enrance exam NEET issue as well. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has released an Expression of Interest (EoI) document this week to identify vendors for developing the Virtual Exhibition for 'Pariksha Pe Charcha.' *—PTI*

UP stampede: Cops say Baba is on the run

Police personnel are deployed outside ashram

MAINPURI, 4 JULY

A man named Vinod (in white) mourns with his sons as he performs last rites of his family members in a stampede on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Police entered the ashram premises of religious preacher Jagat Guru Saakar Vishwahari Bhole Baba here and later said he was not present there. A police official said they had gone there to check security arrangements.

Police personnel have been deployed outside the ashram since the stampede at the preacher's congregation in Harthras claimed 121 lives.

In reply to a question by reporters, Circle Officer Sunil Kumar Singh said police and special operation group (SOG) personnel entered the ashram premises on Wednesday night.

"There were 50-60 sevadars (volunteers), including women, inside the ashram," he said. Asked whether 'Satsang' preacher Bhole Baba is inside the ashram or not, the police officer said, "He (Baba) was neither there yesterday nor today."

Additional Superintendent of Police, Mainpuri, Rahul Mithas said the preacher was not seen in his ashram. Asked why police personnel entered the ashram, he said, "We are not here for a probe. We are here to check security."

The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday formed a three-member judicial commission headed by a retired high court judge to probe the Hathras tragedy, also looking into the possibility that a "conspiracy" was behind the stampede. The police have filed an FIR against the organisers of the 'satsang' near Phulhari village in Hathras. 'Mukhya sevadar' Devprakash Madhukar and other organisers are named as the accused in the FIR filed at the Sikandra Rau police station late on Tuesday. The preacher, who is called Jagat Guru Saakar Vishwahari Bhole Baba, is not on the list. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who visited Hathras on Wednesday and met the injured, was asked why the preacher was not named in the FIR as an accused.

Meanwhile, the bodies of all victims of the Hathras stampede have been identified and handed over to their families, District Magistrate Asish Kumar said here on Thursday.

A total of 121 people, mostly women, had died after the stampede at self-styled godman Baba Bhole's satsang in Hathras on Tuesday.

"There were three bodies which were unidentified till Wednesday. Two of them were identified late last night," Kumar said. Senior Congress party leader KC Venugopal said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will be visiting Hathras soon. *—PTI*

> **Look, there can't be a conspiracy in this. The conspiracy could be that the government wants to run away from its responsibility. Government cannot run away from its responsibility**
>
> -Akhilesh Yadav, SP President

MARCH AHEAD

Students' Federation of India activists shout sogans during a protest over the alleged irregularities in NEET-UG exams 2024, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEET-UG candidates move SC to stop retest for all

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Over 50 successful Gujarat-based NEET-UG candidates, including several who have been ranked first, have moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to restrain the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) from cancelling the controversy-ridden exam.

They have sought a direction from the top court to the Union Education Ministry to probe, identify and take strict action against students and others who indulged in unfair practices like paper leak and impersonation in the NEET-UG exam conducted on 5 May this year.

The fresh plea by 56 students has been filed days before a top court bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud is scheduled to hear as many as 26 petitions seeking reliefs like re-test and probe into the conduct of the examination plagued by allegations of malpractices.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. NEET-UG, 2024 was held across 4,750 centres on 5 May and around 24 lakh candidates appeared in the exam.

Allegations of irregularities, including paper leaks, have led to protests in several cities and sparring between rival political parties.

The pleas seeking cancellation of the exam, re-test and high-level probe are listed for hearing on 8 July in the SC.

> **The state government should present the data on the students' performance ten years before and after the test came into existence. Let the government say if any particular section like OBC, SC/ST has been affected due to the test**
>
> -K Annamalai, TN BJP state Chief

Meanwhile, the plea sought a direction to the Centre and the NTA to identify and punish the examinees who adopted unfair means, identify the centres and take appropriate action where any "compromise to the established guidelines for NEET-UG 2024 examinations has been done. *—PTI*

R'than minister Meena keeps poll promise, resigns

JAIPUR, 4 JULY

Meena **PHOTO: PTI**

Rajasthan Minister Kirodi Lal Meena, who had said he will quit the state Cabinet if the BJP loses any Lok Sabha seat under his responsibility, has submitted his resignation but it is yet to be accepted.

Meena -- who holds multiple portfolios including agriculture, rural development, disaster management and relief minister -- said the party high command has called him to Delhi on Friday and he would explain to them why he put in his papers.

The 72-year-old said he has no expectations, or resentment with the organisation or Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma.

Meena said he has submitted his papers due to his public vow that he will resign if the party loses LS any seat under his responsibility.

During the recently held elections, he had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi assigned him seven seats in eastern Rajasthan on which he worked hard during the polls. In the Lok Sabha poll results announced on 4 June, BJP lost four seats, including his native Dausa, in eastern Rajasthan. Overall the BJP won 14 of the state's 25 seats, its tally coming down from 24 in the 2019 polls.

"It is my moral responsibility to resign. I met the chief minister but he rejected my resignation... my credibility among the people should remain intact, I have resigned," he said. When asked whether he was unhappy with the party for not making him a deputy chief minister, Meena said. Earlier, Meena posted on X, "Raghukul reeti sada chali aai, pran jaai par vachan na jaai' to underline his unwavering intent to keep his promise at any cost.

Meena campaigned on eastern Rajasthan seats including Dausa, Bharatpur, Karauli-Dholpur, Alwar, Tonk-Sawaimadhopur and Kota-Bundi. *—PTI*

MEET-AND-GREET

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy meets Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi. They discussed on issues related to development projects and central assistance to the state **PHOTO: ANI**

Naidu meets PM, seeks aid for Andhra Pradesh

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national capital on Thursday and described their discussions on key development issues concerning the state as "constructive".

During the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Naidu advocated for increased assistance to Andhra Pradesh in lieu of special category status.

He presented several crucial proposals for the state's development and sought the Union government support, sources said.

Following the meeting, he expressed confidence in Andhra Pradesh's potential to "re-emerge as a powerhouse among states" under Modi's leadership.

"Today, I had a constructive meeting with the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri @narendramodi Ji, in Delhi to address important matters concerning the welfare and development of Andhra Pradesh. I am confident that under his leadership, our state will re-emerge as a powerhouse among states," Naidu tweeted.

The PMO confirmed the meeting between Naidu and Modi via social media.

Naidu also met Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan to discuss state-specific issues. Meanwhile, YSRCP Chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday accused Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of creating a fear psychosis among people who did not vote for him.

He said that people who did not vote for Naidu's TDP were being targeted across the state *—PTI*

No Congress-AAP alliance in Haryana and Delhi: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

There does not appear to be much scope for an alliance between Congress and AAP for the Assembly polls in Haryana and Delhi but the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will fight elections together in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, AICC General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Thursday.

In an interview with PTI, Ramesh said there is no one formula the INDIA bloc will follow for state elections. The grouping will fight together in states where Congress leaders and other alliance partners agree to such an understanding, he said.

Asked whether the INDIA will fight the assembly polls together going forward, Ramesh said the alliance will do so in Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

"There is no INDIA 'janbandhan' in Punjab. In Haryana, we had given one seat to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Lok Sabha polls but I don't think that INDIA janbandhan will be there for assembly polls. In Delhi, the AAP itself has said that INDIA janbandhan will not be there for assembly polls," Ramesh said.

The Congress and AAP had fought the Lok Sabha polls together in Delhi, while they contested separately in Punjab. *—PTI*

Woman moves SC against WB Guv

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

A contractual woman employee, who has alleged molestation by West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose, has moved the Supreme Court against "blanket immunity" conferred to him under Article 361 of the Constitution.

According to Article 361, criminal proceedings cannot be instituted in a court against the Governor during his term of office.

The woman petitioner has sought directions to frame specific guidelines under which Governors enjoy immunity from criminal prosecution.

"This court has to decide whether a victim like the petitioner can be rendered remediless, with the only option being to wait for the accused to demit his office, which delay will then be inexplainable during the trial, and render the entire procedure a mere lip service, without any justice to the victim herein," the plea said.

- The plea has also sought a probe into the case by West Bengal police and protection for her and her family along with compensation from the government for her loss of reputation

The plea has also sought a probe into the case by West Bengal police and protection for her and her family along with compensation from the government for her loss of reputation.

The contractual woman employee of Raj Bhavan had lodged a complaint with Kolkata Police alleging that she was molested by Bose in the governor's house on April 24 and 2 May. She accused Bose of orchestrating a "ridiculous drama" to deflect attention from his actions, emphasising that he should have provided the CCTV footage from premises to police at the outset of the investigation. Amid the controversy over the woman's allegation, Bose had filed a defamation case against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on 28 June, a day after the Banerjee claimed that women complained to her that they were afraid to visit the Raj Bhavan because of the activities there. *—PTI*

DOWN BY 2%

LS poll winners won average of 50.58% votes: ADR

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

The winners of Lok Sabha elections 2024 won an average of 50.58 per cent votes, down by 2 per cent as compared to the last general elections, according to an analysis by the poll rights body ADR.

Among the elected MPs with declared criminal cases, 42 per cent won with a vote share of 50 per cent and above, the ADR report said.

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch (NEW) have released a comprehensive analysis of the vote share in the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, examining 542 out of 543 constituencies. The Surat constituency in Gujarat was excluded from the analysis as its candidate was elected unopposed.

the BJP had 75 out of 239 winners (31 per cent). For the Congress, 57 out of 99 winners (58 per cent) won with less than 50 per cent votes. Among regional parties, 32 out of 37 winners (86 per cent) from Samajwadi Party, 21 out of 29 winners (72 per cent) from All India Trinamool Congress, and 14 out of 22 winners (64 per cent) from Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam won with less than 50 per cent of the vote share. Out of the 251 winners with declared criminal cases, 106 (42 per cent) won with a vote share of 50 per cent and above, while 173 out of 291 winners (59 per cent) with clean backgrounds secured more than 50 per cent of the vote share. *—PTI*

Cong demands 'white paper' on Agnipath scheme

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Amid a row over compensation to "Agniveer" martyrs, the Congress on Thursday said the government should bring a "white paper" on the Agnipath scheme for short-term military recruitment, so that the country gets to know the reality.

Congress's ex-servicemen department chief Colonel (retired) Rohit Chaudhry claimed that the family of late "Agniveer" Ajay Singh from Punjab's Ludhiana has got only Rs 48 lakh from the Centre, while it has received Rs 1 crore from the Punjab government and Rs 50 lakh as insurance money from a private bank. *—PTI*

Defence ministry gives ₹300cr for 'Make in India'

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The Ministry of Defence has sanctioned over Rs 300 crore through its Technology Development Fund (TDF) to create an ecosystem aimed at enhancing capabilities in cutting-edge technology and promoting 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, an official statement said on Thursday.

TDF scheme is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Defence, executed by DRDO under the 'Make in India' initiative. Under this initiative, the government provides grants-in-aid to Indian industries, including MSMEs and startups, as well as academic and scientific institutions, for the development of defence and dual-use technologies that are currently not available in the Indian defence industry.

With these initiatives, the Ministry aims to engage private industries, especially MSMEs and startups, to foster a culture of design and development in military technology and support them with grants-in-aid. TDF seeks to enhance the capacity and capability of Indian industries for the design and development of defence technologies in the country. It aims to create an R&D ecosystem where industry and academia work together to meet the current and future requirements of the Armed Forces and the defence sector. The government aims to achieve 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence technology by building a robust defence manufacturing ecosystem in the country. *—PTI*

Assam Rifles launches rescue Ops in Manipur

IMPHAL, 4 JULY

Assam Rifles launch Operation Jal Raahat in Imphal to prevent flooding. A Flood Control Room has been activated with helpline number 7075578116 with effect from 6 PM on 2nd July 2024, said Assam Rifles in a statement. Reports of severe waterlogging and rivers reaching high flood levels have been received from Imphal West, Imphal East, and Thoubal Districts. On Tuesday, on requisition from civil administration, two Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) columns were deployed in New Checkon and Mahabali Temple in Imphal. —*PTI*

Veteran actress Smriti Biswas dies

NASHIK, 4 JULY

Veteran actor Smriti Biswas, who worked in a number of Hindi, Marathi and Bengali films, has died at her residence in Maharashtra's Nashik city, sources said on Thursday. Biswas, 100, breathed her last late Wednesday night following age-related issues, they said. A noted yesteryear actor, she was living in a one-room-kitchen rented flat in Nashik Road area here. She started her career as a child artist and featured in movies of notable filmmakers like Guru Dutt, V Shantaram, Mrinal Sen, Bimal Roy, BR Chopra and Raj Kapoor. Biswas co-starred with actors like Dev Anand, Kishore Kumar and Balraj Sahni in various films. She debuted in the world of films with the Bengali movie "Sandhya" (1930). —*PTI*

Kids fall ill after inhaling smoke in Kerala hospital

KASARAGOD, 4 JULY

Several children suffered physical discomfort and were hospitalised after allegedly inhaling smoke from the generator of a hospital near their school at Kanhangad in this north Kerala district on Thursday. The District Collector has ordered an inquiry into the incident and the Kanhangad sub-collector was instructed to conduct an immediate inquiry and submit a report, the district administration said. Over 15 children studying in the Little Flower School at Kanhangad here were admitted to various hospitals after experiencing discomfort allegedly due to inhalation of the fumes from the generator. Visuals on TV channels showed children admitted to the hospitals complaining of dizziness, nausea, and breathing difficulties, among others, after inhalation of the fumes. —*PTI*

'CBI geared to help states implement new criminal laws'

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

CBI Director Praveen Sood on Thursday said the central agency is geared to help states and other stakeholders implement the three new criminal laws which came into force earlier this week. He also said that the CBI is working with the Law Ministry to successfully implement the three new laws. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replaced the Indian Penal Code(IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act respectively from 1 July. Addressing an event at the CBI academy, Ghaziabad where Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal presented the President's Police Medal (PPM) for Distinguished Service and Indian Police Medal (IPM) for Meritorious Service to 39 CBI personnel, Sood said the agency and the Law Ministry are working in synergy to prioritise more efficient prosecution along with investigation. —*PTI*

EAM, Wang focus on Ladakh row

They agree to maintain peace along border

ASTANA, 4 JULY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in China on Thursday *PHOTO: X/JAISHANKAR*

India and China on Thursday vowed to redouble efforts to resolve the remaining issues in eastern Ladakh at the earliest and "stabilise and rebuild" ties even as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during a meeting that the Line of Actual Control (LAC) must be respected.

In the talks held on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Jaishankar underlined the need for fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements and protocols reached between the two sides in the past for the management of the border.

Jaishankar and Wang had an in-depth exchange of views on finding an early resolution of the remaining issues along the LAC in eastern Ladakh to "stabilise and rebuild bilateral relations."

In the meeting, the external affairs minister also reaffirmed India's persistent view that the relations between the two sides must be based on mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity.

"Met with CPC Politburo member and FM Wang Yi in Astana this morning. Discussed early resolution of remaining issues in border areas. Agreed to redouble efforts through diplomatic and military channels to that end," Jaishankar said on 'X'.

"Respecting the LAC and ensuring peace and tranquility in the border areas is essential. The three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest - will guide our bilateral ties," he said. India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

"To that end, they agreed that the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs should hold an early meeting," it said. The MEA said Jaishankar reiterated that the India-China relationship is best served by observing the three mutuals -- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests.

It said the two ministers agreed that the prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side. —*PTI*

WAITING FOR 11TH?

Another bridge collapses in Bihar, 10th in 15 days

PATNA, 4 JULY

The small bridge over Gandaki river was situated in the Baneyapur block and used to connect many villages in Saran *PHOTO: SCRRENGRAB*

Another bridge collapsed in Bihar on Thursday, the 10th such incident in the state in just over a fortnight, an official said.

The latest incident was reported from Saran which witnessed two more bridge collapses in the last 24 hours, District Magistrate Aman Samir said. No casualty was reported after the structure, built 15 years ago by local authorities, collapsed this morning, he said. The small bridge over the Gandaki river was situated in the Baneyapur block and used to connect several villages in Saran with the neighbouring Siwan district.

"The small bridge was constructed 15 years ago. I am going to the spot. Several other officials of the district administration have already reached there. The exact cause of the bridge collapse is yet to be ascertained but desilting work was recently undertaken," the district magistrate told PTI.

On Wednesday, the Saran district witnessed the collapse of two small bridges - one in Janta Bazar area and another in Lahladpur area.

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Bihar government to undertake a structural audit and set up an expert committee to identify bridges that can be either strengthened or demolished based on the findings.

The PIL, filed by advocate and petitioner Brajesh Singh, raised concerns about the safety and longevity of the bridges in the state that witnesses floods and heavy rains during monsoon. —*PTI*

HC judge recuses from hearing bail pleas of Sharjeel

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Delhi High Court judge Amit Sharma recused himself on Thursday from hearing a batch of bail pleas in a UAPA case linked to an alleged larger conspiracy behind the 2020 communal riots here, including that of student activist Sharjeel Imam.

The matters were listed before a division bench headed by Justice Prathiba M Singh after a change in the roster of judges dealing with such cases. "Let these matters be listed before another bench of which one of us, Justice Sharma, is not a member, subject to the orders of the acting chief justice, on 24 July," Justice Singh ordered. The other accused persons in the case include RJD youth wing leader and Jamia Millia Islamia student Meeran Haider and Alumni Association of Jamia Millia Islamia president Shifa-ur-Rehman. Imam, United Against Hate founder Khalid Saifi and several others, including former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Umar Khalid, have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the February 2020 riots in northeast Delhi that left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured. —*PTI*

3RD DEATH IN 2 MONTHS

Kerala boy dies from brain-eating amoeba

KOZHIKODE, 4 JULY

PHOTO: METROVAARTHA

A 14-year-old boy, who was under treatment for amoebic meningoencephalitis, a rare brain infection caused by a free-living amoeba found in contaminated waters, died at a private hospital here.

The deceased, Mridul, died at 11.20 pm on Wednesday, Kerala state health department said on Thursday. This is the third case of fatal infection reported in the southern state since May. The first instance was the death of a five-year-old girl from Malappuram on 21 May and the second a 13-year-old girl from Kannur who died on 25 June.

According to the health department sources, the child had taken a dip at a small pond here and preventive measures were being taken. Medical experts said the infection occurs when free-living, non-parasitic amoebae bacteria enter the body through the nose from contaminated water.

The health authorities have advised people to exercise caution against amoebic meningoencephalitis. The disease was earlier reported in coastal Alappuzha district in the state in 2023 and 2017. —*PTI*

WHAT IS BRAIN EATING AMOEBA?

- The amoeba 'Naegleria fowleri' is a free living micro-organism which can lead to a severe & deadly brain infection in humans which can even lead to death of the person infected
- **Generally found in:** Warm fresh water bodies, Water heater lakes, Tap water, Poorly chlorinated pools (under 0.5 mg/m3), geothermal well water
- **How can a person get infected?** Patients develop an infection named Primary Amoebic meningoencephalitis & that infects central nervous system. The amoeba enters through the nasal passage & then enters the brain.
- **Symptom** :The infected person can get mild symptoms like headache, fever, nausea, within 5-12 days of the contact, followed by stiff neck, Inattentiveness, seizure, hallucinations.
- **Treatment:** Use of antifungal amphotericin B, Rifampin, Fluconazol & Drug named miltefosine.

FLOODS GRIP NATION

Villagers carry their cattle on a boat at a flood-affected area, in Kamrup district in Kerala; Himveers of ITBP assist Amarnath Yatra pilgrims at 15,000ft on Mahagunas top in Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday *PHOTOS: PTI*

16.50L hit in Assam; 5.6K begin Amarnath yatra despite rains

GUWAHATI, 4 JULY

The flood situation in Assam further deteriorated with over 16.50 lakh population affected in 29 districts with the major rivers flowing above the danger level across the state on Thursday, an official bulletin said.

The animal mortality includes 11 hog deer due to drowning in the park and five during treatment. The forest officials rescued 63 hog deer, two each of otter, sambar and a scop owl and one each of a rhino calf, Indian hare and a jungle cat. Currently, 26 animals are under treatment while 29 others have been released after treatment, the official said.

An alert has been sounded in Kamrup (Metro) district with the Brahmaputra, Digaru and Kollong rivers flowing above the red mark with vast tracts of land inundated. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is scheduled to visit flood-affected areas in Maligaon, Pandu Port and Temple Ghat areas in Guwahati Metropolitan area on Thursday to take stock of the situation.

Sarma chaired a meeting on the flood situation with all District Commissioners late on Wednesday night and directed them to be liberal in granting relief as per norms, complete all rehabilitation claims as per norms before 15 August and provide accurate information to the headquarters so that adequate relief can be ensured.

Despite heavy rains, a contingent of over 5,600 pilgrims set off from Jammu towards the twin basecamps, Baltal and Palagam, of the Amarnath cave shrine on Thursday, officials said. —*PTI*

Heavy rains lash several parts of HP, 115 roads closed

SHIMLA/MANDI, 4 JULY

Heavy rains lashed several parts of Himachal Pradesh, leading to the closure of 115 roads for vehicular traffic. The Shimla meteorological office Thursday issued an orange alert, warning of heavy to very heavy rains accompanied by thunderstorm and lightning. Meanwhile, cracks have developed at a stretch between Mandi to Pandoh of the Chandigarh-Manali four-lane road and it has started sinking, officials said. Over 100 roads have been blocked after heavy rain battered Uttarakhand.—*PTI*

Landslides snap communication in 7 Arunachal dists

ITANAGAR, 4 JULY

Landslides triggered by rain have snapped surface communication in at least seven districts of Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday, officials said.

The districts affected by landslides are Siang, East Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang, Shi Yomi, Leparada and Upper Subansiri.

A portion of the NH-13 along the Pasighat-Pangin-Aalo road has blocked following a landslide on Thursday morning. A huge boulder has completely blocked the road in between Lokpeng and Pangin tri-junction in Siang district, PWD Highways assistant engineer Gemar Padu said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Religious trusts encroach 2.3L sq feet land in Thane

THANE, 4 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

More than 2.30 lakh square feet land has been encroached by 30 religious trusts and temples on Belapur Hill, a landslide prone area, in Navi Mumbai, the reply provided by City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) to a Right to Information plea showed.

This encroachment not only creates environment problems but the huge gatherings at these premises during religious functions can give rise to some untoward incident like stampedes, said NatConnect Foundation founder BN Kumar, who filed the RTI plea.

The largest of these temples is on an area of 43,000 square feet, while there are several structures that are spread over 2,000 square feet, he said, adding that rampant cutting of trees there had loosened the soil. "Despite complaints by various citizens' groups since 2015, no action has been taken," said Kumar. These groups had held a 'save Belapur Hill' rally in April, after which the Maharashtra State Human Right Commission issued a notice to government authorities. Hearing on this matter will be held on 17 July.

In its reply to the RTI query, CIDCO said notices for demolition were given to 30 sites, though a drive to bring down these structures slated between 10 and 12 June could not be carried out due to lack of police protection. Authorities are aware of these illegal structures but no one is taking efforts to resolve the issue, activists Aditi Lahiri and Himanshu Katkar said. —*PTI*

SC collegium rejections can't be made public: HC

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The reasons for rejection of recommendations for appointment of High Court judges by the Supreme Court collegiums cannot be made public as it will be detrimental to the interests of people concerned and will stifle the appointment process, the Delhi High Court has held.

The high court made the observation while dismissing an appeal challenging an order which had rejected a petition seeking a direction to the Supreme Court collegiums to provide detailed reasons while refusing to accept recommendations for appointment of high court judges.

The appointment of a judge to the high court or Supreme court is an integrated, consultative and non-adversarial process which cannot be challenged in a court of law except on the ground of want of consultation. —*PTI*

Dead snake found in mid-day meal packet Maharashtra

SANGLI, 4 JULY

A tiny dead snake was allegedly found in a packet distributed under the mid-day meal scheme meant for children aged between six months and three years at an 'Anganwadi' or a government-run nursery school in western Maharashtra's Sangli district, prompting the authorities to launch a probe.

The incident was reported by the parents of a child in Palus on Monday, said Anandi Bhosale, Vice-President of the State Anganwadi Workers' Union.

Calling it a "serious" incident, Congress leader and Palus-Kadegaon MLA Vishwajeet Kadam raised the issue in the state legislative assembly in the ongoing monsoon session. He demanded a detailed probe into the incident and action against those responsible for it.

District officials said the child's parents disposed of the dead snake after photographing it and sent the image to the local anganwadi sevika (worker). But despite this, the food sample from the packet has been collected and sent to a laboratory for testing, they said.

"Children in the age group of six months to three years receive packets of mid-day meal, a premix of dal khichadi, at anganwadis. These packets are distributed to families once they arrive at the anganwadi," Bhosale said on Wednesday.

The parents took a photo of the snake and sent it to the anganwadi sevika, she said. Bhosale also claimed that there have been complaints about the contractor responsible for supplying the premixed meal packets. —*PTI*

NATURE'S FURY

Mount Etna's Voragine crater erupted on Thursday, after 4-years of silence. The Europe's tallest active volcano is located in Italy's Sicily. The 3,330m-high volcano is believed to have the longest documented history of eruptions among all volcanoes — with records dating back to as early as 425 BCE
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

History will remember Sunak as 1st Indian UK PM

No matter what the outcome of Thursday's landmark general election in the UK is, Rishi Sunak's place in the history books as Britain's first Prime Minister of Indian heritage is secure.

The 44-year-old was undoubtedly the underdog in the election, coming at the end of a long line of Conservative Party leaders over 14 tough years that underwent some seismic shocks in the form of Brexit and then the Covid pandemic. It was in the midst of the latter that Sunak shone as Britain's first Indian-origin Chancellor, stepping up to the seemingly impossible task of reassuring a panicked public about their finances. However, the bond between him and his boss at the time, Boris Johnson, fell prey to the latter's downward popularity spiral with the scandal of lockdown law-breaking party-gate scandal.

Sunak was elected Conservative Party leader on Diwali day in October 2022, when he entered 10 Downing Street as the youngest British Prime Minister in 210 years and the country's very first non-white leader.

In his first address at the doorstep of 10 Downing Street as Prime Minister, Sunak pledged to approach the country's problems with "compassion" and "to place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda".

However, he took charge at a particularly volatile period amid soaring inflation made worse by predecessor Liz Truss' disastrous mini-budget. While he succeeded in his aim to bring inflation back down, the wider sense of anti-incumbency against his deeply divided party has only intensified.

In the ensuing months, both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sunak worked towards clinching a free trade agreement (FTA) but the negotiations stalled in round 14 as both prepared for their respective general election cycles.

"For the record, let me declare that as is a matter of public record, I and my family are of Indian origin. My wife and her family are Indian citizens with financial interests in India," he said, with reference to wife Akshata Murty's shares in Infosys – the software major co-founded by her father Narayana Murthy.

Rishi Sunak was elected Conservative Party leader on Diwali day in October 2022, when he entered 10 Downing Street as the youngest British PM in 210 years and the country's very first non-white leader ***PHOTO: PTI***

Southampton-born Sunak's parents – retired doctor Yashvir and pharmacist Usha Sunak – are of Indian descent, tracing their migration route from Kenya to the UK in the 1960s. He met his Indian wife while they were students at Stanford University and went on to be elected Member of Parliament from the Tory stronghold of Richmond in Yorkshire in 2015.

The former hedge fund expert embraced politics and quickly rose the party ranks from junior ministerial posts to Chancellor of the Exchequer and launched a spirited #Ready4Rishi leadership campaign back in July 2022.

This strong family spirit was on display last weekend when the devout Hindu couple paid a visit to the iconic BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, north London.

"It is dharma which guides me in my approach to public service," stated Sunak, adding that while he's proud to be the first British Indian Prime Minister, he is "even prouder that it is not a big deal".

"The events of the last few days should not make us forget that the United Kingdom is the world's most successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy and we should all be uplifted by that," he said, amid applause.

He was referring to the racist attack on the election campaign trail by a far-right Reform UK activist, which he had emotionally rebutted earlier saying "It hurts, and it makes me angry" when called a "Paki".

But has consistently maintained that "never let anyone tell you that this is a racist country. It is not."

"My story is a British story. A story about how a family can go from arriving here with little to Downing Street in three generations," he said in his conference address last year.

Now, having celebrated a few Diwalis lighting diyas and decorating rangolis on the most famous street in the UK, Sunak has hit a new milestone in his political career. His decision to call a snap summer election triggered the scandal of Tory candidates betting over this earlier-than-expected date sometime in the autumn.

Sunak's gamble to reveal 4 July as the election date while getting drenched on the steps of Downing Street without an umbrella was perhaps never going to be a safe bet, given all opinion polls widely predicting a landslide in favour of the Opposition Labour Party.

Meanwhile, Keir Starmer, the human rights barrister turned Labour Party Leader, has made it a manifesto pledge to pursue a "new strategic partnership" with India, including an FTA, if handed a mandate to form a Labour-led government in Thursday's general election.

Sir Keir, who was knighted by the late Queen Elizabeth II for his services to law and criminal justice, spent much of his career in the legal profession before stepping into the world of politics, first elected as Labour's member of Parliament from London in 2015. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Russian cybercampaigns target French polls

Photos of blood-red hands on a Holocaust memorial. Caskets at the Eiffel Tower. A fake French military recruitment drive calling for soldiers in Ukraine, and major French news sites improbably registered in an obscure Pacific territory, population 15,000.

All are part of disinformation campaigns orchestrated out of Russia and targeting France, according to French officials and cybersecurity experts in Europe and the United States. France's legislative elections and the Paris Olympics sent them into overdrive.

More than a dozen reports issued in the past year point to an intensifying effort from Russia to undermine France, particularly the upcoming Games, and President Emmanuel Macron, who is one of Ukraine's most vocal supporters in Europe.

The Russian campaigns sowing anti-French disinformation began online early last summer but first became tangible in October 2023 when more than 1,000 bots linked to Russia relayed photos of graffitied Stars of David in Paris and its suburbs.

A French intelligence report said the Russian intelligence agency FSB ordered the tagging, as well as subsequent vandalism of a memorial to those who helped rescue Jews from the Holocaust.

Photos from each event were amplified on social media by fake accounts linked to the Russian disinformation site RRN, according to cybersecurity experts.

Russia denies any such campaigns. The French intelligence report says RRN is part of a larger operation orchestrated by Sergei Kiriyenko, a ranking Kremlin official.

The tags and the vandalism had no direct link to Russia's war in Ukraine, but they provoked a strong reaction from the French political class, with denunciations in the legislature and public debate. Antisemitic attacks are on the rise in France, and the war in Gaza has proven divisive.

The Stars of David could be interpreted either as support for Israel or as opposition. The effect was to sow division and unease. French Jews in particular have found themselves unwittingly thrust into the political fray despite, at just 500,000 people, making up a small proportion of the French population.

In March, just after Macron discussed the possibility of mobilising the French military in Ukraine, a fake recruitment drive went up for the French army in Ukraine, spawning a series of posts in Russian- and French-language Telegram channels that got picked up in Russian and Belarusian media, according to a separate French government report seen by The Associated Press.

On 1 June, caskets appeared outside the Eiffel Tower, bearing the inscription "French soldiers in Ukraine."

The larger disinformation efforts show little traction in France, but the Russian audience may have been the real target, officials said, by showing that Russia's war in Ukraine is, as Putin has said, really a war with the West. Among the broader goals, the French military official said, was a long-term and steady effort to sow social discord, erode faith in the media and democratic governments, undermine NATO, and sap Western support for Ukraine.

Denigrating the Olympics, from which most Russian athletes are banned, is a bonus, according to French officials monitoring the increasingly strident posts warning of imminent unrest ahead of the Games.

On 9 June, the French far-Right National Rally trounced Macron's party in elections for the European Parliament. The party has historically been close to Russia: one of its leading figures, Marine Le Pen, cultivated ties to Putin for many years and supported Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. And its leading contender for prime minister, Jordan Bardella, has said he opposes sending long-range weapons to Kyiv.

In more than 4,400 posts gathered since mid-November by antibot4navalny, a collective that analyses Russian bot behaviour, those targeting audiences in France and Germany predominated. The number of weekly posts ranged from 100 to 200 except for the week of 5 May, when it dropped near zero, the data showed. That week, as it happens, was a holiday in Russia.

Many of the posts redirect either to RRN or to sites that appear identical to major French media, but with the domain – and content – changed. At least two of the more recent mirrored sites are registered in Wallis and Futuna, a French Pacific territory 10 time zones from Paris. A click on the top of the fake page redirects back to the real news sites themselves to give the impression of authenticity. Other posts redirect to original sites controlled by the the campaign itself, dubbed Doppelganger.

The redirects shifted focus for the European elections and continued after Macron called the surprise legislative elections with just three weeks to spare. Three-quarters of posts from the week ahead of the 30 June first-round legislative vote that were directed toward a French audience focused on either criticising Macron or boosting the National Rally, antibot4navalny found in data shared with The Associated Press. *—AP*

A Paris Holocaust memorial for the French people, who risked their lives to save Jews, was vandalised with painted red hands on 14 May ***PHOTO: COURTESY, THE JERUSALEM POST***

Hezbollah, Israel rockets & missiles are turning forests into ashes

With ceasefire talks faltering in Gaza and no clear offramp for the conflict on the Lebanon-Israel border, the daily exchanges of strikes between Hezbollah and Israeli forces have sparked fires that are tearing through forests and farmland on both sides of the frontline.

The blazes — exacerbated by supply shortages and security concerns — have consumed thousands of hectares of land in southern Lebanon and northern Israel, becoming one of the most visible signs of the escalating conflict.

There is an increasingly real possibility of a full-scale war — one that would have catastrophic consequences for people on both sides of the border. Some fear the fires sparked by a larger conflict would also cause irreversible damage to the land.

Charred remains in Lebanon

In Israel, images of fires sparked by Hezbollah's rockets have driven public outrage and spurred Israel's far-Right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, to declare last month that it is "time for all of Lebanon to burn".

Much of it was already burning. Fires in Lebanon began in late April — earlier than the usual fire season — and have torn through the largely rural areas along the border.

The Sunni town of Chebaa, tucked in the mountains on Lebanon's southeastern edge, has little Hezbollah presence, and the town hasn't been targeted as frequently as other border villages. But the sounds of shelling still boom regularly, and in the mountains above it, formerly oak-lined ridges are charred and bare. In a cherry orchard on the outskirts of town, clumps of fruit hang among browned leaves after a fire sparked by an Israeli strike tore through. Firefighters and local men — some using their shirts to beat out flames — stopped the blaze from reaching houses and UN peacekeeper centre nearby.

"Grass will come back next year, but the trees are gone," said Moussa Saab, whose family owns the orchard. "We'll have to get saplings and plant them, and you need five or seven years before you can start harvesting." Saab refuses to leave with his wife and 8-year-old daughter. They can't afford to live elsewhere, and they fear not being able to return, as happened to his parents when they left the disputed Chebaa Farms area — captured from Syria by Israel in 1967 and claimed by Lebanon.

In Israel, images of fires sparked by Hezbollah's rockets have led to public outrage ***PHOTO: TIMES OF ISRAEL***

Burn scars in Israel

The slopes of Mount Meron, Israel's second-highest mountain and home to an air base, were long covered in native oak trees, a dense grove providing shelter to wild pigs, gazelles, and rare species of flowers and fauna.

Now the green slopes are interrupted by three new burn scars — the largest a few hundred square meters — remnants of a Hezbollah explosive drone shot down a few weeks ago. Park rangers worry that devastation has just begun.

"The damage this year is worse a dozen times over this year," said Shai Koren, of the northern district for Israel's Nature and Parks Authority.

Looking over the slopes of Meron, Koren said he doesn't expect this forest to survive the summer: "You can take a before and after picture."

Numbers and weapons

Since the war began, the Israeli military has tracked 5,450 launches toward northern Israel. According to Israeli think tank the Alma Research and Education Centre, most early launches were short-range anti-tank missiles, but Hezbollah's drone usage has increased.

In Lebanon, officials and human rights groups accuse Israel of firing white phosphorus incendiary shells at residential areas, in addition to regular artillery shelling and airstrikes.

The Israeli military says it uses white phosphorus only as a smokescreen, not to target populated areas. But even in open areas, the shells can spark fast-spreading fires.

The border clashes began 8 October, a day after the Hamas-led incursion into southern Israel that killed around 1,200 people and sparked the war in Gaza. There, more than 37,000 have been killed, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Hezbollah began launching rockets into northern Israel to open what it calls a "support front" for Hamas, to pull Israeli forces away from Gaza.

Israel responded, and attacks spread across the border region. In northern Israel, 16 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed. In Lebanon, more than 450 people — mostly fighters, but also 80-plus civilians and noncombatants — have been killed.

Exchanges have intensified since early May, when Israel launched its incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah. That coincided with the beginning of the hot, dry wildfire season.

Since May, Hezbollah strikes have resulted in 8,700 hectares burned in northern Israel, according to Israel's Nature and Parks Authority.

Eli Mor, of Israel's Fire and Rescue, said drones, which are much more accurate than rockets, often "come one after another, the first one with a camera and the second one will shoot".

"Every launch is a real threat," Mor added.

In southern Lebanon, about 4,000 hectares (10,000 acres) have burned due to Israeli strikes, said George Mitri, of the Land and Natural Resources program at the University of Balamand. In the two years before, he said, Lebanon's total area burned annually was 500 to 600 hectares (1,200 to 1,500 acres).

Fire response

Security concerns hamper the response to a fire's first crucial hours. Firefighting planes are largely grounded over fears they'll be shot down. On the ground, firefighters often can't move without army escorts.

"If we lose half an hour or an hour, it might take us an extra day or two days to get the fire under control," said Mohammad Saadeh, head of the Chebaa civil defence station. The station responded to 27 fires in three weeks last month — nearly as many as a normal year.

On the border's other side, Moran Arinovsky used to be a chef and is now deputy commander of the emergency squad at Kibbutz Manara. With about 10 others, he's fought more than 20 fires in the past two months.

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PHOTO: X/@META

Brazil blocks Meta from using social posts to train AI

BRASÍLIA, 4 JUNE

Brazil has blocked Meta from using Brazilians' Instagram and Facebook posts to train its artificial intelligence (AI) models. It comes weeks after the company abandoned similar plans to use UK and European users' posts for the same purpose. On Tuesday, Brazil's national data protection agency (ANPD) said it would immediately suspend Meta's latest privacy policy, which allows it to train generative AI models such as chatbots based on posts from its users. A Meta spokesperson told the BBC the company was "disappointed by the decision", adding that their approach complied with local privacy laws. Meta has a significant market in Brazil. There are 102 million Facebook users and 113 million Instagram users in the country. ***—BBC News***

Suspect who shot Slovakia's PM faces terror charges

BRATISLAVA, 4 JULY

The suspect in the attempted assassination in May of Slovakia's populist prime minister, Robert Fico, is now facing terror charges as part of an investigation by authorities, the country's prosecutor general said Thursday. Maros Zilinka said in a statement that the suspect identified only as JC, who was originally charged with attempted murder, now faces the additional charges. Zilinka said the change is based on evidence the investigators obtained, but didn't immediately give further details. The government officials originally said they believed it was a politically motivated attack committed by a "lone wolf," but announced later that a "third party" might have been involved in "acting for the benefit of the perpetrator." ***—BBC News***

A third Japanese climber dies on a mountain in Pak

PESHWAR, 4 JULY

A Japanese climber died while descending one of the highest mountains in northern Pakistan, the third death of a Japanese on the mountain in less than a month, officials said Thursday. Rescuers have located the body of Hiroshi Onishi, 64, who fell into a crevasse earlier this week on 7,027m Spantik Peak, also known as Golden Peak, and arrangements are being made to airlift it by helicopter to the base camp, local officials and the Alpine Club of Pakistan said. His death came after two Japanese climbers, Atsushi Taguchi and Ryuseki Hiraoka, died while trying to scale the same mountain. They went missing 13 June, and Hiraoka's body was found two days later. ***—PTI***

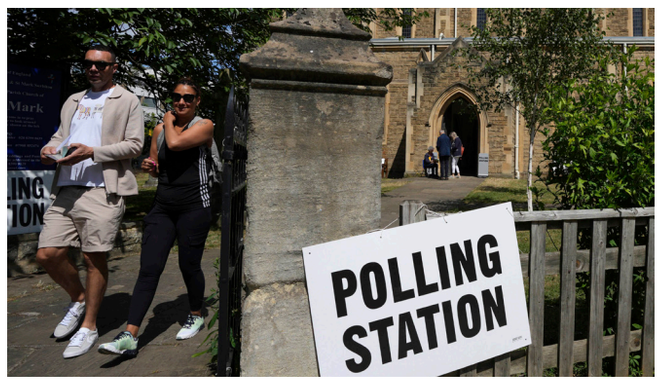
Taiwan flags Chinese activity near territory

TAIPEI, 4 JULY

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said that it detected 30 Chinese military aircraft and 8 naval vessels operating near its territory on Thursday. According to Taiwan's MND, 19 of the Chinese military aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, central, southwestern, and southeastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). In response to China's action, Taiwan sent aircraft, and naval ships and deployed coastal-based missile systems to monitor China's military activity, Taiwan News reported. So far in July, Taiwan's MND has detected Chinese military aircraft 65 times and naval ships 20 times. Since September 2020, China has intensified its use of gray zone tactics by increasing the number of military aircraft and naval vessels that operate around Taiwan. ***—ANI***

UK votes as Sunak's future as PM hangs in balance

This polls may see the ouster of Conservatives after 14 yrs



Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria voted in North London; People leave a church that is being used as a polling station after casting their votes in Kingston

PHOTOS: PA MEDIA/ PTI

LONDON, 4 JULY

The future of Rishi Sunak as Britain's Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party hangs in the balance as polling booths opened across the UK on Thursday, with millions expected to turn out to cast their votes in the general election.

Sunak, 44, is up against voter angst towards the incumbent Tories after 14 years in power and has had to contend with trailing far behind 61-year-old Keir Starmer led Labour Party throughout the six-week campaign.

Both leaders wrapped up their poll pitches with contrasting messages — Sunak urging voters to not hand "tax-raising" Labour a "supermajority" and Starmer playing down the prospect of a landslide win for fear of a low turnout impacting the final outcome.

Candidates are being fielded for 650 constituencies across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with 326 required for a majority in the first past the post system. Besides the two main parties, voters will be choosing from a list of candidates representing the Liberal Democrats, Green Party, Scottish National Party (SNP), SDLP, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Sinn Fien, Plaid Cymru, the anti-immigration Reform Party and several contesting as Independent.

Around 40,000 polling booths opened across the country at 7am as an estimated 46 million registered voters began turning out to mark a cross next to their chosen candidate on a paper ballot.

Since this year, carrying an identification document to the polling booth has become compulsory in UK elections, which are open to all registered adult voters resident in the UK — including Indians as Commonwealth citizens. Several voters have already cast their vote in a postal ballot, which can also be handed in to their local councils if pending.

Once the votes are cast and the booths officially close at 10pm local time, the focus shifts to the definitive exit poll soon after which gives a fair snapshot of what can be expected UK-wide. Counting commences up and down the country right away, with the first results expected just before midnight local time.

"Stop Labour's supermajority" is the central message British Prime Minister Sunak was trying to drive home as he wrapped up his campaign, even as most of the incumbent Conservatives all but conceded defeat in the general election.

"Labour will put up your taxes. Again and again and again," posted Sunak on social media as the catch-all message to wind up the campaign trail. *—AP*

BLAZE BURNS HOTTER

Flames consume a structure and vehicle on Bessie Lane as the Thompson Fire burns in Oroville, California. The fire broke out on Tuesday and could be seen from space as it grew to more than 14 sq km. At least 26,000 residents were evacuated, while hundreds of firefighters toiled to keep flames from reaching more homes ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ukraine's Army retreats as Russia is set to seize key towns

KYIV, 4 JULY

A spokesperson for Ukraine's military said its Army has retreated from a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Chasiv Yar, a strategically important town in the eastern Donetsk region, which has been reduced to rubble under a months-long Russian assault.

Chasiv Yar lies a short distance west Bakhmut, which was captured by Russia last year after a bitter 10-month battle. For months, Russian forces have focused on capturing Chasiv Yar, a town which occupies a strategic, elevated location.

Its fall would put nearby cities in jeopardy, compromise critical Ukrainian supply routes and bring Russia closer to its stated aim of seizing the entire Donetsk region.

Chasiv Yar lies a short distance from west of Bakhmut, which was captured by Russia last year after a 10-month battle ***PHOTO: X/@U24_GOV_UA***

The Ukrainian Army retreated from a northeastern neighbourhood in the town of Nazar Voloshyn, the spokesman for the Khortytsia ground forces formation, told The Associated Press in a written message Thursday.

Ukraine's defensive positions in the town were "destroyed," he said, adding that there was a threat of serious casualties if troops remained in the area and that Russia did not leave "a single intact building." *—AP*

SAYS WHITE HOUSE

'Biden will not quit prez race'

WASHINGTON, 4 JULY

US President Joe Biden, currently facing one of the worst crises of his decade-long political career after a subpar debate performance against his GOP rival Donald Trump last week, is not considering stepping down from the race, his press secretary said Wednesday.

Biden, 81, is increasingly receiving calls from Democratic Party leaders and editorial boards of mainstream American media to step down from the presidential race and let others from the party lead them in the 5 November elections. So far, he has resisted these calls.

At the press conference, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre had a tough time defending the President's statement wherein he attributed his foreign trips to Europe as an explanation to his poor performance at the presidential debate against Trump in Atlanta last week.

US President Joe Biden ***PHOTO: X/@JOEBIDEN***

Meanwhile, Biden asserted that he is the nominee of the Democratic Party for the 5 November presidential elections and there is no pressure on him to quit the race.

Biden's statement is quite contrary to the reports appearing in the media and the internal party murmurs that he should leave the election race amid his dismal performance in the presidential debate against his Republican rival Donald Trump. "I'm the Democratic Party's nominee. No one is pushing me out. I'm not leaving, I'm in this race to the end, and WE are going to win this election. If that's all you need to hear, pitch in a few bucks to help [Vice President Harris] and me defeat Donald Trump in November," Biden said in his fundraising email on Wednesday. After his terrible performance in the presidential debate in Atlanta last Thursday, Biden's approval ratings have dipped, and his own party leaders are calling him to quite the race.

"Look, this campaign is bigger than me or you. Everything we believe in, everything we stand for, and everyone we are fighting for are at risk in this election," Biden said. *—PTI*

HEZBOLLAH FIRES 200 ROCKETS

Israel mulls Hamas' latest ceasefire plan

TEL AVIV, 4 JULY

Israel's Cabinet was set to convene on Thursday to discuss Hamas' latest response to a US-backed proposal for a phased ceasefire in Gaza, as diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the nine-month war stirred back to life after a weeks-long hiatus.

Fighting, meanwhile, has intensified between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah, with the militant group saying it fired more than 200 rockets and exploding drones into northern Israel to avenge the killing of a senior commander in an Israeli airstrike the day before.

Hamas suggested "amendments" last month, some of which the US said were unworkable. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has confirmed that the original proposal was an Israeli one, but has raised doubts over whether it would end the war — a key Hamas demand.

Hamas confirmed Wednesday that it had sent another response to Egypt and Qatar, which are mediating the talks, without providing details. A US official said the Biden administration was examining the response, calling it constructive but saying more work needed to be done. Hamas political official Bassem Naim said that the group has neither accepted nor rejected the American proposal, and has "responded with some ideas to bridge the gap" between the two sides, without elaborating. *—AP*

GASOLINE PRICES MAY SPARK NEW PROTESTS IN IRAN

DUBAI, 4 JULY

As Iran's runoff presidential election nears, comments by an official in the campaign of reformist Masoud Pezeshkian raised the possibility of his government increasing government-set gasoline prices — a move that has sparked nationwide protests in the past.

While still tentative, economists long have warned Iran needs to overhaul its system of subsidies, estimated to cost the Islamic Republic tens of billions of dollars a year.

In 2019, a similar hike triggered mass demonstrations and a bloody crackdown that grew even more intense after the 2022 protests over the death of Mahsa Amini.

On Saturday, Pezeshkian campaign head Ali Abdolalizadeh told journalists that his possible presidency would see price hikes for fuel and other items handled without any outcry.

"Don't worry, petrol at any ... price, you will see that it would be allowed with calmness and cooperation by the people," Abdolalizadeh said.

Hard-liners immediately accused Pezeshkian of planning to increase fuel prices by a factor of eight. Pezeshkian's camp claimed the price under Saeed Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator Pezeshkian is facing in Friday's election, would be 12 times higher, based on remarks by those close to the hard-liner. That official, Majid Karimi, suggested Iranians should be paying the "world price" at the pump.

People gathered at a Jalili rally carried a sign warning against any price hike, saying: "We do not want petrol at price of 250,000 Rial" a litre. That would be 40 cents a litre, or USD 1.55 a gallon. *—PTI*

Pro-Palestinian protesters hang banners from the top of Parliament House in Canberra, Australia ***PHOTO: AAP***

Protesters scale Aus Parliament's roof

MELBOURNE, 4 JULY

Pro-Palestinian protesters breached security at Australia's Parliament House to unfurl banners from the roof on Thursday as a senator quit the government over its direction on the Gaza war.

Tensions over Israel's war against Hamas dominated Parliament's final sitting day before a five-week break.

The four protesters were arrested after draping the words "war crimes" and "genocide" as well as the Palestinian rallying cry "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" for more than an hour over the building's facade known as the Great Verandah. Inside the building, Afghanistan-born Sen. Fatima Payman, the only Australian federal lawmaker ever to wear a hajib during sittings, announced she had quit the ruling Labour Party over her refusal to toe the party line on Gaza.

"My family did not flee from a war-torn country to come here as refugees for me to remain silent when I see atrocities inflicted on innocent people," Payman told reporters.

The first-term senator defied her government colleagues last week by supporting a minor party's motion that demanded the Senate "recognise the state of Palestine". *—AP*

Putin, Xi attend SCO summit amid tense globe

MOSCOW, 4 JULY

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday attended the summit of a security grouping created by Moscow and Beijing to counter Western alliances.

Putin and Xi joined the leaders of other countries that are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at its annual meeting in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana. The grouping was established in 2001 by China, Russia and the four ex-Soviet Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to promote regional security and economic cooperation. It was later joined by India, Pakistan and Iran. Russia's western neighbour and ally, Belarus, joined the SCO on Thursday.

Xi called on the SCO members to show solidarity in the face "the real challenges of intervention and polarisation," according to a readout of his speech by the official Xinhua news agency.

Besides Putin and Xi, and summit host Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, attending Thursday's meeting are Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, President Emomali Rakhmon of Tajikistan, President Sadyr Zhaparov of Kyrgyzstan and President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus. *—AP*

Hurricane Beryl wreaks havoc in Jamaica

KINGSTON, 4 JULY

Hurricane Beryl was roaring by Jamaica on Wednesday, bringing fierce winds and heavy rain after the powerful Category 4 storm earlier killed at least seven people and caused significant damage in the southeast Caribbean.

The US National Hurricane Center said Beryl's eyewall was "brushing the south coast of Jamaica."

Wind-whipped rain pounded the island for hours as residents heeded authorities' call to shelter until the storm had passed. Power was knocked out in much of the capital.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness said on Wednesday afternoon that nearly 500 people were placed in shelters.

By evening, he said that Jamaica has not seen the "worst of what could possibly happen." Several roadways in the country's interior settlements were impacted by fallen trees and utility poles, while some communities in the northern section were without electricity, according to the government's information service. By midday, winds already howled in the capital, turning the sea into churning whitecaps as Beryl's eye scraped by the island's southern coast.

Jamaica was under a state of emergency as the island was declared a disaster zone hours before the impact of Beryl ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

A hurricane warning was in effect for Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, and the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico from Puerto Costa Maya to Cancun. Beryl was forecast to weaken slightly over the next day or two, but still be at or near major-hurricane strength when it passes near the Cayman Islands on Thursday and into Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula late Thursday or Friday, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

Jamaica was under a state of emergency as the island was declared a disaster zone hours before the impact of Beryl. *—PTI*

Surging mkts: CJI advises SEBI, SAT to be cautious

MUMBAI, 4 JULY

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Thursday advised market regulator SEBI and the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) to exercise caution amid a significant surge in equity markets and pitched for more tribunal benches to ensure that the "backbone is stable".

Inaugurating the new SAT premises here, CJI Chandrachud pitched for authorities to consider opening up new benches of the SAT given the higher workloads because of higher quantum of transactions and newer regulations.

Referring to newspaper articles calling the crossing of the 80,000 points milestone by the BSE as an ecstatic moment, where India is entering a "stratospheric domain", the CJI pointed out that such events emphasize the need for regulatory authorities to ensure that everyone holds their "balance and nerves" amid the wins.

"The more you see the surge in the stock market, the greater the role, I believe, for SEBI and SAT, as institutions which will exercise caution, celebrate the successes but at the same time, ensure that the backbone is stable," he said. He added that SEBI and appellate fora like SAT assume "immense national importance" in fostering a stable and predictable investment environment, and explained how this can benefit in economic growth for the country.

"When investors feel assured that their investments are protected by law and that there are effective mechanisms for dispute resolution, they are more likely to invest in the country's markets. This influx of investment can lead to better economic outcomes such as increased capital formation, job creation and overall economic growth," the CJI said.

With the rapid growth in the number of market participants and transaction volumes, there is a likelihood of an increase in disputes he said. *—PTI*

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud with SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch in Mumbai on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Sensex, Nifty hit new highs

ICICI Bank, Tata Motors and Infosys are big gainers

MUMBAI, 4 JULY

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ticked higher to scale fresh all-time high levels on Thursday, following buying in market heavyweights ICICI Bank, Infosys and TCS amid a largely positive trend in global equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 62.87 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 80,049.67. During the day, it rallied 405.84 points to hit a fresh all-time high of 80,392.64.

The Nifty rose 15.65 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 24,302.15. Intra-day, it surged 114.5 points to hit a fresh lifetime high of 24,401.

Among the Sensex pack, HCL Technologies, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Mahindra and Mahindra were the gainers.

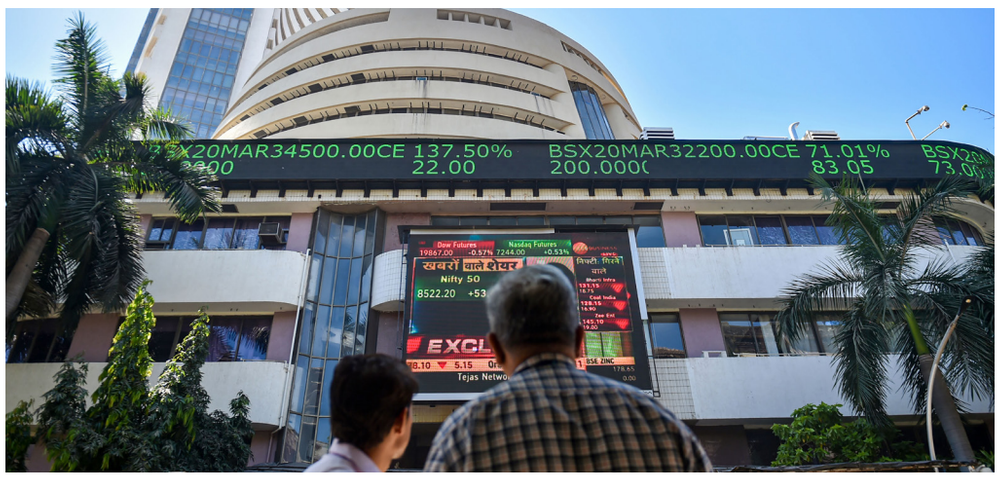
In contrast, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement and IndusInd Bank were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended in the positive territory, while Shanghai closed in the red.

European markets were trading in the green territory in mid-session deals.

US markets ended higher on Wednesday during the shortened trading session. Stock exchanges will remain closed on Thursday on account of Independence Day. Global oil benchmark Brent crude fell 0.52 per cent to USD 86.89 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 5,483.63 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

On Wednesday, the 30-share index hit the historic 80,000 mark for the first time intraday trade. It surged 632.85 points or 0.79 per cent to a record intraday high of 80,074.30. *—PTI*



Sensex ends at 62.87 points higher at 80.049.67 **PHOTO: PTI**

IN 2024

FMCG sector to see revenue growth of 7-9%

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector will see a revenue growth of 7-9 per cent in the current fiscal, says rating agency CRISIL in its report. The growth in the sector will be fuelled by higher volume, revival in rural demand and steady urban demand. The report added that the product realisations are expected to grow modestly with slight increases in key raw material prices for the food and beverages (F&B) segment, while prices for personal care (PC) and home care (HC) segments will remain stable.

The rating agency further added that the Premiumisation and volume growth will expand operating margins by 50-75 basis points to 20-21 per cent, although rising marketing expenses due to intense competition will limit further expansion. The product realisation combines market requirements and resources to define new product designs and the requisite manufacturing and field support.

It studied 77 FMCG companies, representing about a third of the sector's Rs 5.6 lakh crore revenue last fiscal, highlights that the F&B segment accounts for nearly half the sector revenue, with Home and Personal Care segments, each accounting for a quarter. Rural consumer volume growth is expected at 6-7 per cent in fiscal 2025. Higher minimum support prices, and increased government spending on rural infrastructure will also add to rural growth. *—ANI*

Jeff Bezos to sell $5B in Amazon shares

SEATTLE, 4 JULY

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is planning to sell nearly USD 5 billion worth of shares in the technology giant, a regulatory filing showed.

The planned sale by the world's second-richest person comes as Amazon's stock surged to an all-time high, putting it in an exclusive club of companies with a $2 trillion valuation.

The proposed sale of 25 million shares was disclosed in a notice filed after market hours on Tuesday when the stock price climbed to USD 200.43. That marks a 30 percent jump from the beginning of the year, far outpacing the 4 per cent average gain in the Dow Jones Industrial Average index. Once it goes through,

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Bezos would own about 912 million Amazon shares, or 8.8 per cent of the outstanding stock. He sold shares worth roughly USD 8.5 billion in February. Bezos, with an estimated net worth of USD 214.4 billion according to the Forbes Billionaires List, is also the founder of space company Blue Origin, which launched a six-person crew to the edge of space in May.

Courtesy, Al-Jazeera

Kolkata office leasing absorption jumps 33%

KOLKATA, 4 JULY

Office space leasing absorption in Kolkata surged 33 per cent year on year to 0.4 million square feet in the April-June quarter of 2024, according to the CBRE India Office Figures Q2 report.

The key sectors driving absorption in Q2 2024 were technology (40 per cent), BFSI (21 per cent), and flexible space operators (10 per cent).

Another real estate consultant, Knight Frank India, also said that Kolkata's office market saw a significant increase in office leasing volume, with 0.7 million square feet of office space transacted in H1 2024 (January-June 2024). *—PTI*

Housing sales up 11pc in Jan-June, to hit 10 yr peak

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Indian real estate market remained buoyant in January-June this year, with housing sales hitting an 11-year high at 1.73 lakh units and office demand at a record 34.7 million square feet across eight major cities, according to Knight Frank.

On an annual basis, housing sales rose 11 per cent to 1,73,241 units while leasing of office space grew 33 per cent to 34.7 million square feet during January-June this year across eight major cities. Shishir Baijal, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India, said, "India's real estate market has been buoyant in the last few quarters owing to the strong economic fundamentals and stable socio-political conditions." As a result, the residential and office segments have recorded decadal-high numbers, he told reporters in a virtual press conference on Thursday

Bengaluru saw a 4 per cent growth in housing sales to 27,404 units and a 21 per cent rise in office demand to 8.4 million square feet. *—PTI*

Bengaluru saw 4% growth in housing sales **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

SEBI ISSUES CIRCULAR FOR FRAUD PREVENTION IN STOCK BROKING

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), on Thursday issued a circular requiring stock brokers to establish an institutional mechanism for prevention and detection of fraud or market abuse in a bid to protect the interest of investors in securities market.

The circular mandates the implementation of systems for the surveillance of trading activities and internal controls, introduction of a whistle-blower policy, among other obligations.

These requirements are part of SEBI (Stock Brokers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024, which aim to ensure higher standards of market integrity and investor protection.

The standards for implementation of the same, including operational modalities will be formulated by the broker's Industry Standards Forum (ISF), in consultation with the SEBI, the regulator said in the circular. The implementation will be based on the size of the stock brokers. Brokers with more than 50,000 active Unique Client Codes (UCCs) are required to comply by 1 January, 2025. Further, those with 2,001 to 50,000 active UCCs have to comply by 1 April, 2025, and brokers with up to 2,000 active UCCs must comply by 1 April, 2026. *—PTI*

SBI announces ways to mitigate risks in agri loans

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The country's largest lender SBI on Thursday announced 11 new initiatives -- including enhancement of its digital banking features and opening of 35 new Agricultural Centralised Processing Cells -- to mitigate risks in its agricultural loan portfolio.

On the occasion of the 69th Foundation Day, State Bank of India announced these initiatives to widen the bank's accessibility to address the banking needs of its potential customers, the lender said in a statement.

SBI has enhanced its digital payment experience, with the introduction of two exciting features like tap-and-pay on the BHIM SBI PAY app and end-to-end digital loans against mutual funds on the YONO app, it added.

PHOTO: LINKEDIN

The bank has also announced an initiative, which is a fully digital end-to-end journey for SBI Surya Ghar Loan, it said, adding that the users can opt for credit to install solar rooftops under the central government's PM Surya Ghar Scheme, offering loans for up to 10 KW capacity.

- In another move, SBI has launched comprehensively redesigned High Court branches aimed at enhancing services for the legal community

The entire process will be managed on SBI's digital platform from applicant registration on the MNRE/REC portal to loan disbursement.

Acknowledging the significant contributions and global presence of the Indian diaspora in shaping the nation's growth story, SBI opened a second Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala, Punjab.

To enhance its service to NRI clients, its Chairman Dinesh Khara inaugurated the second Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala on Bank Day.

SBI's dedicated GNCs reflect the bank's unwavering commitment to strengthening its ties with the global Indian community.

In another move, SBI has launched comprehensively redesigned High Court branches aimed at enhancing services for the legal community. This initiative underscores SBI's commitment to providing tailored financial solutions that cater specifically to the unique needs of lawyers. The redesigned branches are equipped to offer top-tier services, including financial management, transaction facilitation, and personalised financial advice. *—PTI*

IN INDIA

Cloud resources prime cyberattack target

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

A study by a multinational firm has identified cloud resources as the "biggest targets" for cyberattacks in India.

Thales has announced the release of the 2024 Thales Cloud Security Study, its annual assessment of the latest cloud security threats, trends and emerging risks based on a survey of nearly 3,000 IT and security professionals across 18 countries in 37 industries, according to a statement.

"The study was based on a global survey of 2,961 respondents, aimed at professionals in security and IT management," it said.

In India, nearly half (46 per cent) of the respondents reported that all corporate data stored in the cloud is sensitive and 37 per cent of the participating organisations have experienced a cloud data breach in India with 14 per cent having had one in the past year, the statement said.

Also, 35 per cent of the organisations in India recognise the importance of digital sovereignty initiatives as a means of future-proofing their cloud environments, and globally, nearly half of the organisations acknowledge that it is more difficult to manage compliance and privacy in the cloud versus on-premises, it said. Human error and misconfiguration continue to top the list of root causes of these breaches, followed by exploiting previously unknown vulnerabilities, exploiting known vulnerabilities and failure to use multi-factor authentication it said. *—PTI*

35% of Indian organisations recognise the importance of digital sovereignty initiatives as a means of future-proofing **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

India among most active nations for Threads

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

India is one of the most active countries for Threads, which has notched over 175 million monthly active users globally, according to social media giant Meta.

The update assumes significance as it marks the completion of nearly one year since Meta officially launched rival to X.

"With a 175 million actives, we're seeing Threads become a place where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. India is one of the most active countries for Threads globally," Meta said in a release.

In India, some of the most popular tags and topics on Threads are centred around film, TV and OTT content, celebrity-related conversations and sports.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that Threads has over 175 million monthly active users as the social media giant asserted that Threads was launched with the belief that "everyone has something valuable to say".

"Cricket has been reigning on Threads in India, with players from the current Indian squad like Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja, to former cricketers like Akash Chopra and Suresh Raina, experts like Ridhima Pathak and international cricketers like AB de Villiers sharing their passion for the game," Meta said. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 1 paisa to close at 83.50 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 4 JULY

The rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day on an almost flat note at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, resisting pressure from elevated crude oil prices. Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equities, wherein benchmark indices touched all-time high levels, and significant foreign fund inflows supported the rupee and restricted the fall. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.52 and hit the intraday high of 83.48 and a low of 83.56 against the American currency during the session. It finally settled at 83.50 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paisa lower than its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.15 per cent lower at 105.24. *—PTI*

Gold jumps ₹530, silver bounces ₹1,200

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Gold prices jumped by Rs 530 to Rs 73,080 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday tracking a bullish trend in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also leapt Rs 1,200 to Rs 92,500 per kg. In the previous session, it closed at Rs 91,300 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 73,080 per 10 grams, up by Rs 530 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,355 per ounce, up USD 16 from the previous close. Additionally, silver was quoted higher at USD 30.25 per ounce against USD 29.80 per ounce in the previous session. *—PTI*

Inox Wind surges after ₹900 crore fund infusion

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

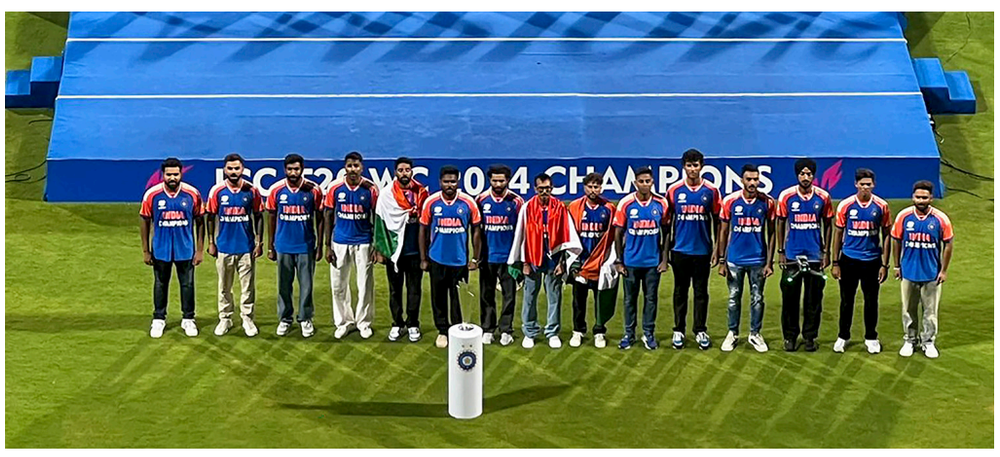
Inox Wind Ltd on Thursday said its promoter Inox Wind Energy (IWEL) has infused Rs 900 crore into the company, following which the wind energy solutions provider will become a net debt-free company. In a statement Inox Wind Ltd (IWL) on Thursday announced the completion of infusion of Rs 900 crore into the company by its promoter Inox Wind Energy Ltd (IWEL). "This fund infusion will help us become a net debt-free company, strengthening our balance sheet and help accelerate our growth. We expect substantial savings in interest expenses going ahead, aiding our profitability further," Kailash Tarachandani, CEO of Inox Wind said. The funds were raised by the IWEL on 28 May, 2024, through sale of equity shares of IWL through block deals on the stock exchanges, witnessing participation of several marquee investors. *—PTI*

Suzuki launches ₹340cr fund to support startups

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Japanese automobile firm Suzuki Motor on Thursday launched its first investment fund in India--Next Bharat Ventures--a Rs 340 crore fund dedicated to fostering impact entrepreneurs who create value in Tier-II and below geographies. This Suzuki initiative aims to support social impact start-ups in the domains of agriculture, financial inclusion, rural supply chains, and rural mobility, through a residency programme. "Next Bharat will invest in growth-stage impact firms and early-stage impact entrepreneurs through its flagship residency programme. In order to improve synergy among our early-stage portfolio, we do Fund of Fund operations, investing in Indian Early Stage Venture Capital firms, " Next Bharat CEO and MD Vipul Nath Jindal told PTI. *—PTI*

THEY'RE HOME



The T20 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team with the championship trophy during their felicitation ceremony at the Wankhede Stadium, in Mumbai 2)Indian cricket team with the championship trophy acknowledges fans during their open bus victory parade ***PHOTO: PTI***

Mumbai halts to salute Team India's Victory Parade

An ocean of humanity greeted the victory parade of T20 World Cup winning Indian team

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Exuberant fans lined up to express support despite monsoon showers and heavy security deployment before Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted them for breakfast as India's T20 World Cup-winning cricket stars returned to a euphoric reception, here on Thursday.

The victory parade of the T20 World Cup-winning Indian team commenced after a two-hour delay as complete crowd chaos along the stretch of South Mumbai brought the traffic to a halt after Rohit Sharma and his men touched down a little after 5 pm here on Thursday.

Hundreds of supporters, holding placards congratulating their favorites and waving the national flag, braved the inclement weather to wait outside the airport for the victorious side, which defeated South Africa by seven runs in the final in Bridgetown on Saturday last week.

There was dancing, there were multiple cakes, and there were fans on the streets showing just why cricket is the most passionately followed sport in the country. The energy rubbed off on the weary players, who joined in the fun after arriving at the hotel from the airport to complete the party atmosphere.

"We have waited for this moment for the past 13 years. The team has made us proud by winning the World Cup," a fan, who claimed to have been waiting since 4:30 am said, referring to India's last World Cup triumph which came back in 2011.

The side was unable to head back home immediately after the title win due to a shutdown forced by Hurricane Beryl in Barbados.

They were cocooned in their hotel before the BCCI secretary Jay Shah made arrangements for a special charter flight.

The Air India special charter flight AIC24WC -- Air India Champions 24 World Cup -- arrived in Delhi at 6 am (IST) on Thursday after a 16-hour non-stop journey.

Heavy security was deployed to keep the crowd in check at the Indira Gandhi International Airport but that did little to dampen the spirits as fans cheered enthusiastically holding up posters of star batter Virat Kohli, skipper Rohit Sharma, and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid.

Two buses were stationed outside the T3 Terminal to ferry the players to ITC Maurya Sheraton, where they were greeted by dhol and traditional Bhangra dancers.

Most of them, including skipper Rohit Sharma, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav, and Rishabh Pant, shook a leg with the assembled dancers, giving them a memory that would last a lifetime.

Even the on-duty security personnel had smiles on their faces as the players let their hair down after the long journey, shook hands with everyone who wanted to, and moved into their rooms after cutting yet another cake, this time in the shape of the trophy they had brought back.

All of this unfolded amid the expected media frenzy. A brief while later, they left to meet Modi at his official residence, continuing a hectic schedule that awaits them through the day.

Accompanied by BCCI President Roger Binny and Secretary Jay Shah, the squad, including outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid, spent close to two hours at the 7, Lok Kalyan Marg residence of the Prime Minister before heading back to the hotel.

—PTI

Mumbai players to be felicitated at Vidhan Bhavan

MUMBAI, 4 JUly

Four Mumbai players of the T20 World Cup cricket team will be felicitated in the Maharashtra Vidhan Bhavan complex here on Friday, state assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar said in the House on Thursday. Suryakumar Yadav, Rohit Sharma, Shivam Dube, and Yashasvi Jaiswal, all from Mumbai, were part of India's T20 World Cup squad. On June 29, the Indian cricket team won the country its second T20 world title, ending an 11-year wait for an ICC trophy. India's previous ICC title was in 2013 when it won the Champions Trophy under Mahendra Singh Dhoni. —PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Gritty Advani wards off Siddharth Parikh

MUMBAI, 4 JULY

Ace Indian cueist Pankaj Advani scored a fine come-from-behind 4-2 win over Siddharth Parikh to keep himself in line for a hat-trick of Asian Billiards titles here. The match started with Parikh taking an early lead. Showing precision, he scored 101 points, leaving Advani trailing with 38. The second frame was a nail-biter. Parikh managed to edge out Advani at 100-99. Parikh's highest break was 65, but the latter almost turned the frame in his favor with an impressive break of 92. Trailing 0-2, Advani bounced back strongly in the third frame with a commanding 101-0 win.—***PTI***

PHOTO: PTI

Praggnanandhaa draws with Nepomniachtchi

BUCHAREST, 4 JULY

World Championship challenger Grandmaster D Gukesh played out a draw with tournament leader and top seed Fabiano Caruana of the United States in the seventh round of the Superbet classic chess tournament here. On another all-draws day, R Praggnanandhaa signed peace with Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia leaving the lead positions intact like the previous round.—***PTI***

Bopanna-Ebden move to second round

LONDON, 4 JULY

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden moved into the second round of the Wimbledon men's doubles event with a smooth win over Robin Haas and Sander Arends here. Bopanna and Ebden sailed past their Dutch opponents 7-5, 6-4 in an hour and 11 minutes in a rain-interrupted match on Wednesday. —***PTI***

India looks to finetune strategies in T20I against SA

CHENNAI, 4 JULY

Indian women's team will be eager to use the three-match T20I series against South Africa, beginning here from Friday, as a testbed to finetune its strategies before hitting the road to the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup.

This is India's last white ball bilateral series ahead of the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka from July 19 and the ICC showpiece in Bangladesh from October 4.

In that context, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will leave no stone unturned in their effort to embark on those big events in the best possible frame of mind.

They have displayed signs of it too in the preceding three-match ODI series in Bengaluru and the one-off Test here.

PHOTO: PTI

Relentless India has won all those assignments despite the Proteas creating pockets of the fight.

Since 2023, India has featured in seven T20I series, winning three of them and losing four. They would certainly want to bridge that gap, however narrow it might be.

India will take consolation from the form of their players in the first two legs of this series.

In the ODIs, vice-captain, and star batter, Smriti Mandhana shone brightly with two hundred and a fifty in three matches, while Harmanpreet found her feet with a hundred in the final ODI.

The only jarring note of that triumphant run might have been the shoddy form of opener Shafali Verma but she allayed the concerns with a fiery double hundred, the quickest in women's cricket, in the one-off Test here.

India vs SA match starts at 7.00 pm (IST).

—PTI

400m runner Deepanshi fails dope test, suspended

NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

NADA has suspended India's top woman 400m runner Deepanshi for flunking her dope test during the recent National Inter-State Championships, where she won a silver medal.

The 21-year-old Deepanshi had clocked a personal best time of 52.01 seconds to finish second behind Kiran Pahal (50.92) in the women's 400m final in Panchkula on Friday.

The in-competition urine sample, which was taken on June 27 (either after the heat race or semifinal), contained anabolic steroids.

"Yes, she has failed a dope test conducted during the National Inter-State Championships and she has been provisionally suspended," a reliable source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Deepanshi ***PHOTO: PTI***

This was the first dope-positive case from the National Inter-State Championships (June 27-30), which was the final qualifying event for the Paris Olympics. Deepanshi does not train at the national camp. *—PTI*

Novak Djokovic beats Fearnley

LONDON, 4 JULY

Seven-time champion and second seed Novak Djokovic takes on local wildcard Jacob Fearnley in the second round of men's singles on the fourth day of Wimbledon 2024 at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTC), London on Thursday.

Seventh-seed Hubert Hurkacz was forced to retire during his second-round match against Frenchman Arthur Fils after the Pole injured his knee during the tiebreaker in the fourth set. In women's singles, top seed Iga Swiatek takes on Croatia's Petra Martic in the second round. Rinky Hijikata and John Peers in the first round in the final match of the day. *—PTI*

Toni Kroos aims to disappoint Real Madrid

LEIPZIG, 4 JULY

Germany great Toni Kroos hopes the next game isn't his last. Heavyweights Germany and Spain clash at the European Championship on Friday when the winner will advance to the semifinals. Kroos is ending his playing career after Germany's last game at Euro 2024.

He hopes that will be the final in Berlin's Olympiastadion. But he knows it could be as soon as Friday if Spain - the most impressive team so far - knocks out the host nation in Stuttgart.

Toni Kroos ***PHOTO: @TONI.KR8S***

Kroos is ending his playing career after Germany's last game at Euro 2024. He hopes that will be the final in Berlin's Olympiastadion. But he knows it could be as soon as Friday if Spain - the most impressive team so far - knocks out the host nation in Stuttgart.

"I'm not nostalgic at all," Kroos said Wednesday at potentially his last press conference as a player. He said he wasn't assuming Spain "will be my last game. So, I think we can all look forward to seeing each other again."

Kroos has played a key role in lifting the pre-tournament gloom surrounding the German team and turning it into optimism that the hosts can go on to win Euro 2024.

It would be a fitting sendoff for a player who has already signed off on a glittering club career by winning the Champions League and Spanish League with Real Madrid. *—PTI*

PARIS OLYMPICS

All sacrifices were worth it: Dhinidhi

BENGALURU, 4 JULY

At times, she misses the carefree pleasures her peers enjoy and occasionally experiences a sense of solitude, but all of that has been worth it for 14-year-old swimmer Dhinidhi Desinghu, who is gearing up to fulfill her dream of competing at the Olympics later this month.

The Bengaluru swimmer, who studies in class ninth, is set to be the youngest member of the Indian contingent at the Paris Olympics.

"Sometimes I miss the fun generally kids of my age have. I do not go out much with friends and feel lonely. But then I wanted to swim and I wanted to go to the Olympics," Dhinidhi told PTI Bhasha in an exclusive interview at her residence.

"I am the one who chose this path for me. With that comes a lot of sacrifices but I do feel different, extraordinary, and proud. At 14, I am going to the Olympics, so all the sacrifices are worth it," she added.

Dhinidhi Desinghu ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Olympic cycle has been an underwhelming one for Indian swimming as none of the swimmers were able to breach either the 'A' or 'B' qualification time. But Dhinidhi has been on a roll, winning medals at the National Games and the senior National championships last year.

Her performances this season made her the top-ranked Indian female swimmer with the Swimming Federation of India handing her one of the two Universality places and an opportunity of a lifetime.

"I knew that I had a chance (of making the Olympics) because I have been working very hard but it was surprising that I got this chance early in my career. Being the youngest one in the Indian contingent is a big honor."

"I am super excited to be a part of the Indian Olympic contingent as I will get a chance to meet the greatest athletes," said Dhinidhi, who will compete in the women's 200m freestyle event.

Having been able to compete at the Olympics at such a young age, Dhinidhi wants to soak in everything and gain experience.

"This is just the beginning and I have a long way to go. I am excited to know what more I can do in 2028 and 2032.

"I want to experience the feeling of staying at the Olympic Village. What kind of races are being held there as the competition in India is different from what we get at the international level. *—PTI*

Tvesa T-24, Diksha T-46 in London Aramco Series

LONDON, 4 JULY

Tvesa Malik Sandhu was unable to hold on to her early gains and finished at even-par 73 to be tied-24th at the end of the first round of the Aramco Team Series London here.

Fellow Indian Diksha Dagar, who will play in the Major Evian Championships next week, shot 2-over 75 to be tied 46 at the Centurion Club, while Pranavi Urs carded a disappointing 7-over 80 and looks unlikely to cut.Tvesa, who lost a play-off last week and missed out on a maiden win on the Ladies European Tour (LET), began well from the 10th tee.

She had a bogey on the 12th but it was followed by an eagle, her third in her last three rounds. She had eagles in the second and third rounds of last week's Swiss Ladies Open.She added a birdie on the 18th to turn in 2-under.

Tvesa Malik ***PHOTO: @TVESISTAR***

She dropped three shots on the second, third, and seventh but got one back with a birdie on the eighth to close at 73. Diksha had three birdies, three bogeys, and a double-bogey.Ireland's Leona Maguire led the individual standings, while her team comprising Solheim Cup winner, England's Liz Young, Spain's Marta Sanz Barrio, and amateur Yana Wilson, was joint leader after day 1 at 14-under. Leona's team shared the lead with Team Nuria Iturrioz and Team Georgia Hall. *—PTI*